

THE MAGAZINE OF THE



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

ISSUE 1/03 - February 2003

Overstay debate/Licensing response/BSSvRCD

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2003 CALENDAR

Council meetings	Copy dates
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March 8th	March 15th
April 26th	May 3rd
June 7th	June 14th
July 19th	July 26th
Sept 6th	Sept 13th
Oct 4th	Oct 4th
Nov 15th	A.G.M.
Nov 29th	t.b.a.

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

We have had a second council meeting which was extremely well attended. The council are optimistic and working as a team on your behalf. It is going to be a busy and interesting year.

On the campaigning front we are pushing for a Regulator to cover all the Navigations. This has come about mainly through British Waterways ignoring its users' concerns and pricing many of its long term boaters off the waterways they love. We get many letters from our oldest members saying "Sorry, they have beaten us, we can no longer afford our boat". The other much heard complaint is "Boating is no longer fun, there are too many regulations". The Ombudsman's hands are tied, although he does his best to help, he can only deal with maladministration, not legal issues.

The way British Waterways dealt with the mooring price increase was completely unfair. Little or no consultation, and, as each group of moorers had to negotiate with their Waterways Manager, the results differed from mooring to mooring. Some managed to negotiate very substantial discounts, others with less bargaining skills have had to pay up or move off. Now the latter are being targetted for staying in one area without a mooring.

British Waterways are now trying to bypass the legislation that controls them in the 1995 Act. If they change the licensing conditions to include rules on continuous cruising, when you sign your licence application form you are signing a legal document. If British Waterways consider that you have broken the terms of your licence you won't get another. There is no appeal system, no court costs for BW, no presumption of innocence.

THIS IS WHY WE WANT AN INDEPENDENT REGULATOR.



One bit of good news – Congratulations to the Environment Agency for keeping their registration and mooring increases to 2.5%. Their increases are being kept to the minimum for the next four years. If one navigation authority can do this, why not another which has much more earning power from other sources?

We are planning a busy year of events. We started with the London Boat Show which was very high profile. We did some useful networking and our members were brilliant in coming to help. Unfortunately there were extra items that made it three times the cost that council had approved, but it was too late to pull out when we discovered them. This made it financially uneconomic.

'Boats on Show' at Penton Hook brings a new departure for us. We have been invited to hold a boat gathering, but as it is our first it will be on the small side. If succesful and we repeat this next year we will be looking for venues. This will be a lovely chance to get together for a weekend. It has been advertised by the organisers as a 'narrowboat rally' but it is definatly not. Although two narrowboats are already booked in, so is a Dutch barge.

The other thing members will notice is the change of council members. They come and go for many reasons, some work hard for many years to the detriment of other hobbies and interests, others find the commitment doesn't fit in with new jobs, new house or new wife, some have health problems. The council is thus an ever changing entity and I believe this makes it stronger as it always has new blood and new ideas.

Sue Burchett

NABO responds on Licences

Mr Paul Wagstaffe
Customer Relations Manager
British Waterways

15th January 2003

Dear Paul

Craft Licence Fees 2003-2006 - Proposals for consultation, autumn 2002

Thank you for sending us the above proposals. Our comments, which follow the sequence of your document, are as follows:

Background

C and D: If craft numbers and network availability are to be used as factors affecting pricing, one would largely offset the other this year. One would also wish to take into account the large sections of the network unavailable for use during the winter months: a particular problem in 2003, with no available north/south route.

E: Comparative costs per mile of very different sorts of waterway are totally misleading, at least until the cost of flood prevention on the scale of the Thames or the Nene becomes necessary on all canals.

Indexing of rates

1.1: The statement that "The index should reflect the cost to BW of maintaining the network" is superficially attractive, but unsound on detailed examination. BW operates under a Framework Document which includes a duty on you to "wherever possible to charge its customers for benefits received consistent with prevailing market rates". We quote here from a letter from Dr George Greener to the Rt. Hon. Francis Maude MP. Implicit in the terms "market rates" and "customers" is a retail price measurement such as RPI. Arguably, BW is precluded from adopting the sort of index measurement you propose unless it is consistent with the terms of the Framework Document just quoted.

The Framework Document used these terms because prices to members of the public in both the public and private sectors are linked to RPI. This is normally the basis on which salaries and pensions are adjusted and hence it is the measure of the level of increase people can afford.

Furthermore, large elements of British Waterways costs are incurred in areas such as administration, property costs, marketing and related activities. Maintaining the network may be a core activity, but it is not an overwhelming proportion of total costs - unfortunately!

0.1 to 0.3 (Following your numbering): Even accepting this line of reasoning for the sake of argument (which we do not), it is arguable that all the indexes you have chosen are arbitrary, and that others, which give very different results are equally or more appropriate. For instance:

- Major repairs and renovations could more suitably be covered by an engineering index than by a construction price index. Further, the appropriateness of an industry output price index is dependent on you as an organisation have actually experienced such price increases, which given your bargaining position is highly unlikely. We would suggest that the engineering industry earnings index available from the National Statistics web-site is at least as appropriate. It gave an increase of just 2.4% in the year to December 2001.
- The use of the GB Whole Economy Average Earnings is misleading in that it does not reflect your own experience. An analysis of your 2001-2002 published financial statements shows that after stripping out staff level increases (on an average basis), your staff costs increased by just 3.1% over the previous year.
- The Corporate Services Price Index is described by National Statistics as "experimental". It is therefore not a sound basis to use at present. Also, it implies that you have to pay arms-length rates for your internal services, which is not true. They are largely provided in-house, for the very good reason that they cost you less that way.

Increase in network size

If potential for user use is a criterion, we will wish to discuss the whole question of discounts based on the amount of the system unavailable during the "closed season". We would further wish amounts contributed by other bodies, such as the Waterways Trust and regional and local authorities, to canals such as the Chesterfield and the Huddersfield, to be taken into account. Further discounts would need to be available to users of original dimension vessels who should be able to use these waterways, but can't. See also our comments under **Background**, above. Do you really wish to pursue this line of argument? It could easily lead to a powerful justification for lower charges!

Changes to licence fee structure

We are broadly in agreement with these comments, although we would not necessarily wish to see a fall in the licence cost for smaller craft to be extended to electrically-powered boats, as these attract a discount already (sorry!). The whole question of the detail of the fee restructuring and redefinition of length categories is beyond the scope of this response, and should be dealt with separately.

Summary

In the light of the foregoing, it will come as no surprise that we disagree with this. It is clear from your figures that the methodology you have chosen produces a result which you recognise is unacceptable.

It is also complex, lacks transparency, and is not readily understandable by the average boater, who may well suspect that the indices have been selected less for their appropriateness than for the size of the result. Instead of an arbitrary reduction for 2003 to "sweeten the pill" we suggest a more valid approach would be to create a more reasonable methodology. An alternative might be: Cost index: Average of RPI (1.8%) and BW salaries increase (3.1%), reduced by 20% for efficiency target, giving 2.0%; increased mileage 0%; removing charges for major structures, etc, 1%. Total 3.0%.

SUMMARY

We do not consider the arguments used to justify a change in basis from market to cost to be valid, in the light of the requirements of your Framework Document. We do not consider your chosen indices to be valid representations of your increased costs, even supposing a cost basis were valid. We do not consider there to be any justification for charging more for increased mileage of waterways, unless part of a re-examination of the whole question of availability of use. We do not agree with your proposed methodology to arrive at the increases, nor do we agree with the proposed charges after 2003.

We would be happy to discuss this response further, if clarification would be useful. We would welcome your revised proposals on this subject.

Yours sincerely

Press Statement about Waterways Regulator

The Council of the National Association of Boat Owners has voted unanimously to press even harder for a truly independent regulator for the waterways. Support is growing both inside and outside the Palace of Westminster for someone to arbitrate when a dispute cannot be resolved between a customer or 'User Group' and one of the inland navigation authorities, a function that NABO believes should not be administered or financed by any party over which the Regulator may have to pass judgment.

NABO has for a long time held the view that the powers of the Waterways Ombudsman have not been wide enough to tackle the full range of disputes involving boat owning customers, and certainly in the case of the canal network, where BW has a virtual monopoly on providing navigation, it feels a parallel can be justifiably drawn with BT's control of the telephone network which resulted in the need for OFTEL."

The beginning of the end for the Boat Safety Scheme?

The way in which the BSS will be applied to craft complying with the Recreational Craft Directive and bearing the CE mark is a subject that has exercised the minds of NABO Council for some years.

The BSS booklet and supporting documentation has always been rather dismissive and vague since when the scheme was introduced the prospect of the RCD was merely a distant speck on the horizon.

The scheme rules permit a newly built boat with a CE mark to be granted a Boat Safety Certificate for the first 4 years of its life on the inland waterways but seem to suggest that after the initial 4 year period, the boat would have to comply with the full rigours of the BSS. This could entail expensive and extensive modifications to craft because the standards of the BSS are far more stringent than the Essential Safety Requirements of the RCD.

The question is "Would the imposition of the BSS on craft which were built to comply with the RCD be legal under European law?"

In order to attempt to clarify the legal position NABO has given its support to the Royal Yachting Association to seek Counsel's Advice.

It may well be the case that any refusal to grant a new 4-year BSC to an RCD Compliant boat would be a breach of the Directive and therefore unlawful. The objective of the Directive was to harmonise safety and construction standards (the Essential Safety Requirements) and thereby enable a boat to be placed on the market anywhere within the EU. The Directive applies equally to complete craft, part-built craft, second-hand boats and to individual components and makes reference to the craft being "correctly constructed and maintained". It would therefore appear on the surface that so long as an RCD compliant boat has been maintained to the requirements of the Directive, no other body can insist on subsequent modifications to comply with national or local regulations.

It will be interesting to follow the initial test cases that will occur and to see how the BSS authorities reconcile their scheme with the RCD. If, as we suspect, the BSS is found to be in conflict with the RCD, then the need for the BSS will decline as more and more new craft appear on the waterways, leaving BSS inspections and modifications only to be imposed on old boats not bearing the CE mark. This topic looks like keeping the lawyers busy for years. Watch this space!

Stephen Peters

Overstaying on Public Moorings

Adrian Stott

BW has said that the topic on which it gets the most complaints is boats which stay too long on public moorings, so it has directed Matthew Routledge (Waterway Manager, Grand Union South) to produce recommendations for action in the near future.

I am proposing the following as a constructive suggestion to help BW deal with the issue without imposing distasteful measures on boaters and unduly constricting their ability to roam the waterways relatively freely. Because BW is moving fast, I hope it will be discussed at the next Council meeting and your views would be welcome.

The Problem.

The first thing to get clear is that the problem is people keeping their boats long-term (whatever that means) on public moorings (non-paid moorings, particularly against the towpath). Most boaters, and BW, feel that such moorings should be short-term only, for the use of transient boats, and using them for permanent moorings makes them unavailable for visitors. It also leads to ever more linear moorings, which many boaters dislike. Because public moorings usually have few, if any, facilities, it can lead to such undesirable things as storage of the boater's possessions on the towpath, or parking of his car in an inappropriate location.

The problem is not continuous cruising. BW initially assumed that most overstaying boats did not have permanent moorings, so it introduced the rule that each applicant for a boat licence must have, and identify, the boat's home mooring. It was then forced to recognise that many transient boats do not have, or need, such a mooring, so it had to create the Continuous Cruising licence. Now there is a growing general assumption is that it is those nasty continuous cruisers who are to blame for the towpath clogging, and it is getting to the point that they are viewed as an inferior class. This is unreasonable and unfair. Many continuous

cruisers do not overstay, and in fact many of those who do overstay have conventional licences (and declared permanent moorings).

The Goal.

Next, we need to agree what we are trying to achieve. I suggest it is to ensure that each boat on public moorings moves to another location after no more than a specified number of days, and does not return to it before another specified number of days has elapsed. This is crucial, as if we don't agree on the ends, we surely won't agree on the means.

There are some other criteria I think we need to consider:

Legal soundness. The rules must be within BW's legal authority.

Clear rules. It must be absolutely clear to all boaters exactly what the rules are. The other side of this is that it must be easy for BW to determine whether a boat has violated the rules, and to do something about the situation if it has.

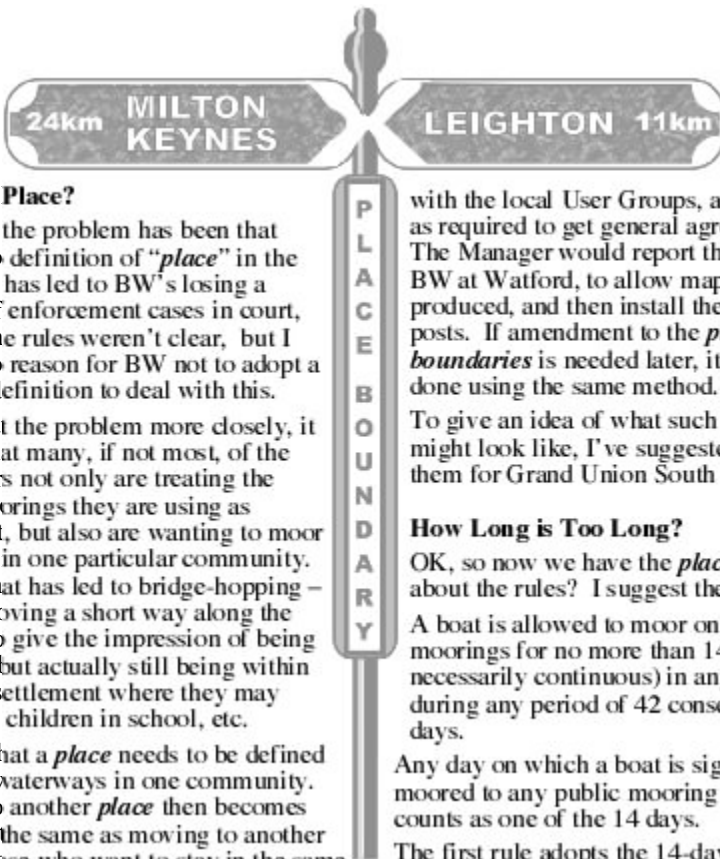
Special cases. Any boat which cannot move (because of stoppages, or unexpected personal emergencies such as sudden illness) should not be required to do so.

Are you happy with starting from there?

The Approach.

BW has recently proposed a variety of measures for dealing with overstays. These included requiring all boaters to keep a log book which BW can inspect, or requiring each person wanting a Continuous Cruising licence to file a cruising plan for the coming year. Most of them appear to be outside BW's authority, quite apart from being repugnant impositions on boaters.

BW's legislation specifically allows it to require boats on public moorings not to stay in the same place for more than a certain number of days. This seems to me to be the sensible starting point.



What's a Place?

However, the problem has been that there is no definition of “*place*” in the Act. This has led to BW’s losing a number of enforcement cases in court, because the rules weren’t clear, but I can see no reason for BW not to adopt a standard definition to deal with this.

Looking at the problem more closely, it appears that many, if not most, of the overstayers not only are treating the public moorings they are using as permanent, but also are wanting to moor long term in one particular community. This is what has led to bridge-hopping – boaters moving a short way along the towpath to give the impression of being transient, but actually still being within the same settlement where they may have jobs, children in school, etc.

So I feel that a *place* needs to be defined as all the waterways in one community. Moving to another *place* then becomes (roughly) the same as moving to another town. Those who want to stay in the same town will then need to find a proper permanent mooring there. It will also make it possible to give each *place* a readily-understood name (such as “Milton Keynes”).

Such *places* are easy to set out on the ground. Wherever a waterway crosses a *place boundary*, there could be a post on the towpath identifying that boundary. There would then be no question as to whether a boat has moved from one *place* to another.

There will need to be a procedure for choosing the *place boundaries*. I suggest that this be handled by the Waterway Managers. BW centrally would give them the criteria for defining *places* (similar to the above discussion), and give them a deadline to propose *places* covering all the waterways in their area. The proposal would then be discussed by the Manager

with the local User Groups, and amended as required to get general agreement. The Manager would report the results to BW at Watford, to allow maps to be produced, and then install the boundary posts. If amendment to the *place boundaries* is needed later, it can be done using the same method.

To give an idea of what such *places* might look like, I’ve suggested a set of them for Grand Union South below.

How Long is Too Long?

OK, so now we have the *places*. What about the rules? I suggest the following.

A boat is allowed to moor on public moorings for no more than 14 days (not necessarily continuous) in any *place* during any period of 42 consecutive days.

Any day on which a boat is sighted moored to any public mooring in a *place* counts as one of the 14 days.

The first rule adopts the 14-day standard that seems to be generally accepted by most boaters. But the key is that it is now 14 days **anywhere** in one *place*, not 14 days at the same public mooring.

The 42 days means that a boat may not just oscillate between one *place* and the next one (i.e. hop backwards and forwards over the same *place boundary* every two weeks). It will have to move among at least three *places* to comply, which I hope is too inconvenient for most overstayers.

The “not necessarily continuous” ensures that moving to another *place* for just a day or two does not reset the 14-days count to zero.

The second rule makes for feasible enforcement. BW simply has to record sighting the boat on any public mooring in a *place* on a day to count that day towards the allowed 14. A counted day is not subtracted until six weeks later, regardless

of where the boat has been during that six weeks. But, on the other hand, if BW sights a boat on only a Monday and the following Thursday, it can count only two days, not four.

That's it. Basically, you would be able to stay in each town for two weeks out of any six. Simple and clear rules, readily enforceable, allowing (what I hope NABO members will think are) reasonable and flexible staying times for transient boaters while preventing the use of public moorings as permanent ones.

But what if a boat needs to stay in a *place* for more than 14 days? There are two possibilities. The boat owner can get a permanent mooring in that *place* (then the boat will not be on a public mooring, so the days will not be piling up), or he can make arrangements with the Waterways Manager to treat the public mooring that the boat is on as a permanent mooring for the time being. The Waterways Manager would agree this as a matter of course in the Special Cases mentioned above. The boater should expect to pay for the

mooring in some of these circumstances, though.

Another benefit of this approach would be that BW could abandon the Continuous Cruising licence. If there are workable rules for preventing overstays on public moorings, why should BW care any more whether a boat has a permanent mooring? If everyone has the same licence, no one can be treated as second class.

What Do You Think?

If NABO is going to have much effect on the rules which are surely coming in this area, it needs to put forward its own proposal very soon. We have already seen some of BW's ideas, and they look rather unpleasant. We have to recognise that BW has a problem to solve, however there are ways to achieve that without being draconian. It is such ways that NABO should champion.

The above is the best solution I have been able to come up with – if you can improve on it, please let NABO know what you have in mind.

Adrian Stott

Possible 'Places' in Grand Union South.

Each Place takes in an entire named community, and the boundaries have been chosen as far as possible not to have good land access (to discourage boundary hopping). The length of waterway in the Place is shown in brackets.

UXBRIDGE (16 km):	Cowley Peachey junction to Lot Mead railway bridge
WATFORD (13 km):	Lot Mead railway bridge to Nash Mills railway bridge
HEMEL (15 km):	Nash Mills railway bridge to Bridge 136 (above Cowroast)
TRING (13 km):	Bridge 136 to Bridge 118 (Slapton) (and to Wendover)
AYLESBURY (10 km):	Entire Aylesbury arm
LEIGHTON (11 km):	Bridge 118 to Bridge 106 (Stoke Hammond)
MILTON KEYNES (24 km):	Bridge 106 to Wolverton Aqueduct
STOKE BRUERNE (18 km):	Wolverton Aqueduct to Bridge 47 (Gayton) (and to Rothersthorpe top lock)
WEEDON (16 km):	Bridge 47 to Bridge 19 (Brockhall Park)

Another view. . .

Sue Burchett, speaking as a boater living aboard much of the time, replies:-

We have people in this country who have fought for the right to roam and here you advocate a restriction on travel. I consider the freedom of movement a fundamental human right.

We have members who have lived in the communities, you wish to regulate, for years. Do we now say, “*Sorry chum, sell your boat and get off the waterways. We don’t believe you should have the right to move around in one area, so if you want to stay, get a mooring and stay tied to one piece of bank.*”?

If we accept that the towpath is a public mooring, when does it cease to be a public mooring? Answer— when BW decides to charge for it or turn it into a private paid mooring. Should we let BW sell off the towpath or maintain that it is a “public” mooring?

Tied in with the getting rid of ‘continuous mooring’ is the idea of creating more “temporary” paid moorings. They have found moorings for those that want them in the past and are now back in the same position. Too many boats chasing too few moorings. Also people that are paying extortionate rates to tie up to the towpath are resenting the people who aren’t paying.

My view is that the only way BW can regulate this is by rationing continuous cruising licences and charging those that don’t move at all.

The bypassing of the 1995 Act by changing the licencing conditions must be resisted.

And yet another . . .

Carole Sampson cruises widely but has a permanent mooring:-

Collins new English Dictionary defines the words ‘continuous’ and ‘cruising’ as: without end, not having any breaks in it, and, to sail about from place to place for pleasure. This fits in with the perception held by many boaters, that the continuous cruiser is a public spirited soul, who, having spent many hours planning a route around the winter stoppages, is permanently on the move, give or take brief stays for personal or social engagements, covering the system from end to end, reaching all the most remote parts of it, keeping the infra-structure working, the channel open, and giving movement to otherwise idle waters. All this so that the system is there for the rest of us to enjoy whenever we can.

The term ‘continuous cruising’ is used in the British Waterways Act 1995, so we are stuck with it: seven years on it is still causing controversy and unending discussion. Part of the problem, I feel, is that several differing boating lifestyles are being included under that banner when they clearly do not fit. Another part is British Waterways, with £ signs flashing in front of them, giving its blessing to over-winter moorings, which I think is in direct contravention of the meaning of the term ‘continuous cruising’, and also allowing long-term moorings almost anywhere, even on a part of what has previously been a visitor mooring.

So what is the solution? We need another category, say, ‘live-aboards’: those who live on their boats, who do not wish to moor in the same place and have to look at the same bit of bank all the time, but who are restricted to one area because of job or schooling for example. They are happy not to have a reserved bit of bank with their name on it, and want to cruise short distances regularly. As with anything in life these days, the problem is that there are those who abuse the system. So what regulations need to be imposed, and how can they be enforced?

I suggest that the present 14-day mooring limit be EXTENDED in rural areas to a month. Anyone who wishes to moor out in the wilds, miles from a bridge let alone the facilities of a town, but who is not inconveniencing anyone else, should be allowed to do so. Visitor moorings, especially those with access to shops and other necessary facilities should be short term and for visitors only. BW already has the powers to deal with those anti-social folk who abuse their stay on such moorings, so they should get on with using them. Such live-aboards put extra strain and cost (metered water, rubbish disposal etc.) on the small area they inhabit, so they should pay a small surcharge to cover this.

What about the bona fide continuous cruiser? Present ideas being bandied about, regarding overstaying on moorings, which are meant to ensure non-abuse, are not easy to enforce, so whatever definition is adopted needs to be simple enough for us all to understand and be enforceable.

BW has already divided the waterway network into five regions. I suggest substituting ‘region’ for ‘place’. To qualify as a true Continuous Cruiser, a boat would be entitled to stay in a region for the maximum of three months, then would have to move to another region, with a minimum of three different regions being visited in a twelve-month period. This could be verified by lock keepers who take details of boats passages, or by the boater visiting a BW office if all else fails (this would only need to be a maximum of four times a year). We’ve all heard ad nauseam about Project Clearwater: in this day and age, it is more than possible for BW staff to send in details of the boats they’ve seen for record purposes. In view of what I said earlier about the good that is done in keeping waterways used and open, a DISCOUNT (balanced by the surcharge paid by live-aboards) on the licence fee, purely as a thank you, could be given retrospectively.

Problem solved, at least until the next person comes up with a different set of ideas!

Advertisement

ON LINE DEVELOPMENTS

It has always been my aim to make the website (like this magazine?) useful as well as 'newsy', so I have given it a small make-over. You will see the buttons have been re-organised and one now is labeled 'WATERWAY INFO'.

This brings up a page with a map and list, either of which you can use to choose a waterway and find out for it:-

- Any unannounced **stoppages** brought to our attention
- Contact details for the NABO **Regional Secretary**
- Contact details for its controlling **navigation authority**
- **Floodline** quickdial number(s)
- Limiting craft **dimensions** (courtesy of member John Russell)

Future plans may include access to overnight mooring data, 'Skipper's Guides' and anything else you might request – suggestions welcome.

SS

P.S. Would anybody like to prepare Skippers' Guides for their own stretch, e.g. the Ribble and its Link?

MARINE BAND RADIO COURSES

With proposals afoot to equip all the BW locks next to the Tidal Thames with VHF radio, it makes even more sense for the adventurous boater to obtain an Operator's Certificate. I have been trawling the RYA website and have selected some training centres offering the one-day course required which are close to inland waterways, and so may be more convenient for members.

Rather than include the full list here, I am happy for anyone interested to contact me and I will give them the phone number for their nearest centre or send the list (S.A.E. please). Quite a number of these centres also offer diesel courses.

Advertisement

WORRIED WOMAN of the WATERWAYS

Hello

It's me again - Dot, the Worried Woman of the Waterways.

I hope that you are having a happy 2003 so far, but you **know** how I worry about things. Not, of course, that I consider you as a **know-all**, but I'm sure that you have met that kind of person. They have only been on the cut for five minutes and already they are telling the world in general, and you in particular-

- how to do things,
- what you are doing,
- why,
- the complete history of the canals, boats, carrying etc etc.....

This is all told loudly to anyone nearby and, of course, it is their version of things.

I just worry that people listen and even believe them. What will folk think we are up to? Otherwise their discourses can become very entertaining satire for us with a wry sense of humour. When this type of know-all is employed to care for the waterways then we all have cause to worry!

Knots- Now why would anyone worry about these?

Boats can be tied up using a boatman's hitch, with the rest of the rope coiled tidily on the boat. This way the boat is secure and easily released as the knot will never jam, and the free rope won't tangle up.

There are many other ways to attach a boat to something. I list three of the most popular ones I have seen, with the names I have given them.

The Throttle Knot

With this one, the rope is wound round the dolly and knotted so many times it looks like someone is trying to throttle it. If there is a change in water level or a jerk on the rope caused by a passing craft, that knot will jam solid.

The Casual Knot

Here a few loops or hitches are made round a bollard and the rest of the rope left around it on the towpath as a tripping hazard. There is a fair chance that a passing craft or just rocking in the wind will pull this one undone.

The Lorrydrivers Knot

Now this is not disrespectful to lorry drivers, they use good knots that suit their purposes. However with this knot the rope is tied to whatever, then lashed, laced, hitched, looped and woven until every inch is bound up. It must take ages to do and undo.

Lorry drivers do this with the ends of ropes to stop them flapping as they drive along.

I worry that this knot is unwieldy, unnecessary and some would say unsafe, on a moored boat?

I also worry about know-alls talking about the knots on the roping and sheeting of historic boats. You see, mostly there are none, the ropes are held in place by tension, not knots. This enables quick removal and the ropes don't get tangled or jammed.

Another big worry is the **K&A**, now why should anyone worry about a canal that has been restored, improved and maintained with great expense and labour?

Hurrah!

I thought that as canals were built for boats that was what they were restored for. Now the worry is 'What was the K&A restored for?'

There are plans for 'fishing only' areas and the profile being altered in places so that boats cannot get into the side to moor!

Wildlife and boats get on fine together, it is the pollution and dumping of rubbish and waste that harm the environment.

Now the K&A is declared full. There are no places for new permanent moorings and all marinas full up.

If all the licensed boats on the canal decided to move on the same weekend there would be chaos. In some places they probably couldn't all get out of the marina entrance the queue would be so long.

There are comparatively few spaces for mooring on the towpath and all the popular places are quickly filled up.

I worry that boaters will soon be like the Ancient Mariner doomed to cruise for ever on the K&A looking for a place to tie up.

Are there **knights** of the cut like the knights of the road? Are boaters kind to each other these days? Or is it all for one, if that one is me and a 'Blow you Jack I'm all right' attitude to the rest?

Well, I shall leave you to look in the mirror and worry about that one.

Happy worry-free boating.

Your friend WWW DOT

Advertisement

Why Freight by Water?

The canals and inland waterways were constructed principally for the carriage of freight. There was some passenger carrying, but the arrival of the railways led to the rapid demise of the packet boat services. Many waterways were busy with freight until the late 1950's and early 1960's, while some have continued to carry significant tonnages.

Today there is a group of waterways which are larger in size, and generally based on the estuaries, which can still play a part in the movement of freight economically, and environmentally. It is the Government's wish to see as much freight as possible transferred to rail and water, and the purpose the Freight Facility Grants regime (established some years ago) has been revamped and promoted.

Some people might complain at the 'bribery' being used to encourage industry to use the waterways more for freight. It is by no means uncommon for governments to use taxes and grants to encourage or discourage activities for the 'greater public good'. As is generally accepted, and well documented, heavy goods vehicles enjoy a huge public subsidy, in that the revenue from lorry road fund taxes and excise duty (VAT on fuel is reclaimed) does not

remotely cover the cost of wear and tear to the road system, the costs of building new roads, costs of accidents, congestion, policing, pollution and so forth. It is understood that heavy lorries do 1000 times more damage to roads than cars and light vehicles. Bad planning has meant that industry has been sited nearer motorways than railways or waterways so that the advantages of these other modes cannot be exploited. The same diesel engine that powers a lorry with a payload of 20 tonnes can move 500 tonnes in a barge (you can easily work out the tonne/miles/gallon) so not only is less fuel per tonne/mile used but the pollution is significantly reduced, too. While on the subject of pollution, of course barges and boats do not require tyres, which consume a vast amount of a diminishing rubber resource, and which are such a problem to dispose of when worn.

Fewer heavy lorries on the roads means more space for the remaining road users, less congestion, less pollution, less need for new road building. Of course, in the case of waterways, benefit is likely to be local rather than national, but no less welcome - the Aire & Calder could take more than 1000 lorries per day off the M62! ▶



Sand and petroleum barges tied up on the Aire and Calder Navigation

The object of the Freight Facility Grant system is to attempt to 'level the playing field' for rail and water. It is paid as a capital grant (i.e it does not, at present, cover running costs) on the basis of 'lorry miles' removed, though the current grant for motorways is quite small - 20p per lorry/mile. The grant is paid out of general taxation - it is not specifically taken from motor and fuel taxes, although that might be considered an appropriate source! Grant can cover cost of craft, loading and discharge gear, wharves and some improvement to the waterway - the scope is being gradually extended and refined.

The organisation receiving the grant has to show that the activity would not be viable without the grant because of the unequal nature of the road competition. There are a number of 'hoops' to get through before grant is paid out. The application (unless very small) is generally vetted first by an independent consultant such as Rolandon Water and Sea Freight Advisory Services, and then the people at the Grant Unit go through it with a fine tooth comb. They will especially check the route the lorries would take, and the mileage, and the tonnage - an average lorry weight of 20 tonnes is assumed, (although the very biggest 38 tonne gross weight vehicles can in theory carry 26 tonnes) and most journeys are doubled for empty running back. (It may be this doubling of miles that prompted a recent comment that the number of lorries saved is often exaggerated. It is not, and cannot be - and it is easy to check).

Grant is usually paid out over the period of the contract, and if the tonnage/lorry saving is not achieved then a proportion of

it would have to be returned as part of the Agreement.

It is worth noting that grant will not be paid to take traffic from rail on to water or vice versa. Grant is also paid to KEEP traffic on rail or water, though one could suppose at that point the mode could change if a smaller grant favoured it. It

could also be the case (but it has not happened yet) that traffic would be encouraged on to water from rail if the rail system were so congested it could not cope - and that is becoming an increasing problem on the railway system. Is it cheaper to lay additional lines, sidings, junctions, and put in additional signalling, at huge cost (eg at Immingham) or use an underused existing waterway of suitable size (e.g. the Humber and associated waterways)?



A lot of petrol going into Whitley Lock

No-one is seriously suggesting that large scale long distance traffic on the narrow canals is ever likely to be viable. But the smaller waterways can offer opportunities for 'niche' traffics such as the very long running aggregate traffic from Thurmaston to Syston (which took thousands of lorries off the roads), or the new gravel traffic on the Grand Union. It is therefore unlikely, say, that the Rochdale or Leeds & Liverpool Canals would be used in their entirety for freight, but a short distance traffic might work, with modern craft carrying say 50/60 tonnes payload.

Much is made of the long journey times compared to road and rail. Journey time is not always important, especially as many traffics suitable for water and rail often only go from one store to another. Imported coal, for example, has been on

the high seas for many days - another half day up to a waterside storage area is of no consequence. Imported goods can be loaded direct to barge in Hull or Immingham, Liverpool, or London, and next day delivery achieved - much the same as rail. Just imagine how many lorries going backwards and forwards, and the time it would take to move 500 tonne barge loads from say Hull to Leeds!

It is true that if it is necessary to load and unload directly from/to road vehicles at each end then the journey might as well go all the way by road, unless a sea journey is involved. The ideal is to encourage waterside siting of suitable industry and warehousing so that double handling is avoided if at all possible.

Historically it is too simplistic to say the railways killed the canals - the speed of freight trains was very low, and wagons spent much of their time in sidings (still do!). After the coming of the railways many canals and waterways prospered with rising tonnages (the Leeds & Liverpool was carrying a million tonnes a year in 1960). What killed off most freight carrying on the smaller waterways was the dramatic changes to the pattern of industry; coal usage declined sharply as consumers turned to oil and gas (or closed). Natural gas replaced coal gas; waterside pits closed, along with the smaller power stations which had used canal transport. Larger ships brought about the demise of the smaller waterway linked docks such as Regents Dock, Weston Point, and Gloucester, while the opening of the M1

and the great freeze of 1962/3 did terminal damage to the Grand Union as a major freight waterway.

Far from 'flogging a dead horse', the example of mainland Europe where waterways no bigger than ours (and some smaller than, say the Aire & Calder) are busy with freight AND pleasure craft, increasing congestion on our roads (which the Government admits will increase), and environmental considerations means that we in the UK do need to look at ways of increasing the use of water (and rail) for carriage of freight wherever it is feasible.

There are advantages, too, for the waterways and their users. More freight craft might offset the decline in the number of hire boats. Tolls are a useful income for navigation authorities - a barge might pay, in two journeys, the same as a pleasure boat pays in a year! Barges are an all year round activity providing colour, spectacle, activity and purpose to waterways which are grossly underused, and under-boated, for much of the year. The passage of heavily loaded freight craft along a waterway helps to keep the channel clear and encourages the navigation authority to keep structure (locks etc) in good condition. Where freight boats can go, so can pleasure boats (easily)!

I am quite certain, from comments made to me during my own travels round the system in an unconverted narrow-boat, that many, the majority even, of waterways users would welcome a properly managed increased usage by freight craft.

David Lowe

Chairman

C B O A

Northern Region

Member NABO



Waddingtons barges on the South Yorkshire Navigations, probably loaded with steel.

EDITORIAL

Guilty as charged! – I did say when I took over this magazine that if it degenerated into a ‘Council mouthpiece’, I should be told, and I have been. Yes – not only was the last issue **late** because of changes within Council so close to Christmas, but too much of it was **about** Council, even my editorial, for which I apologise. Please take no notice of any idle speculation or gossip, judge us on what we achieve.

One achievement was being at the London Boat Show – we were at an event where even BW feared to tread! I felt a glow of satisfaction that it was partly due to the E-mail Bulletin that we found enough members to assist our Chairman to man the stand for all **twelve days** (certainly some achievement on her part!). I hope members won’t take exception to requests like this in the future should the need arise,

Talking of shows, one thing I may have briefly mentioned before is that, as an editor, I was invited to a press gathering at the Environment Agency stand at last year’s ‘National’. What I haven’t passed on are the ‘off the record’ feelings I gleaned from those I have spoken to then and since.

NABO has maintained its support for EA retaining control of its navigations, but this has never had unanimous approval from members, so I don’t think EA would mind if we asked the ‘doubters’ to have patience before judging its performance. For so long has it been starved of cash and incentive to look after its navigations that much of its practical expertise and wherewithal has been lost, something it cannot instantly regain however many tasty financial morsels are put on its plate.

Another problem with EA keeping control of navigation is that BW is now getting mileage out of the so-called ‘alternative’ to claim it does not have a monopoly, even though EA is in no position to provide the same sort of inland cruising that the canal system can. I was disturbed to see a BW statement quoting that EA had 20,000 vessels licensed relative to BW’s 25,000. EA’s waters have under 10,000 powered vessels they say, which is surely the figure one should use for comparison.

Perhaps the only way to have competition is to divide ‘navigation providing’ from ‘network maintenance’, in the same way that you can miraculously choose which company supplies your gas even though it comes through the same pipes.

Digressing now, it is probably about time I thanked those cruising clubs who forward me copies of their magazines. In particular ‘Buoy’s Own’, whose editor, Allan Pickering, condenses NABO News into less than a page for his readers and gives me a very handy insight into what someone else finds worth reading. Not only that but he seems able to unearth a wealth of one-liners which invariably raise a chuckle or two at the breakfast table!

So to this issue – little room for frivolity here, we have a lot of serious stuff, but I hope you find it varied and thought provoking. The debate about ‘Boats without home moorings’ goes on, justifying my previous comments about ‘Think Different’. I just wish that when other boaters complain, BW staff could just ask overstayers to move on and they would comply, so there would be no need for more rules.

Finally, I gather that we have over thirty readers at the helm of posh desks at BW – greeting to you all, and I hope you find this publication gives you some insight into what boat owning folk feel and think.

Stuart Sampson

Editor– NABO News, 48 Old Lane. Bramhope, Leeds LS16 9AZ

NOTICES

POST FOR NABO NEWS

The Editor is still on dry land for issue 2/03 so please send contributions to

48 Old Lane, Bramhope,
Leeds LS16 9AZ

E-mail still-
news.editor@nabo.org.uk



FREE BOOKLET SEE BOTTOM OF PAGE 21

For sale: Eberspacher E 1726 Hydronic Narrowboat kit diesel water heater (as new, still in the box never used) - note: no header tank

£ 600.00 o.n.o.

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CAN YOU HELP US IMPROVE THE B.S.S.?

 NABO is looking for anyone with experience of implementing the BSS, fitters, examiners etc. who would like to see the scheme made more workable for boat owners. Please contact our Vice Chairman (Contact details on back page) 

TORGEM Solid Fuel Stove, No Back Boiler But Complete With Enamel Flue
£ 50.-

Any information on Boat lengthening services in the Nottingham area gratefully received.

Tel/Text: 07802 711781 or email
jeremy.rowe@orange.net

MORE HELP NEEDED -

Our Midlands Regional Secretary has recently had to review his priorities, he has got married. Congratulations to him and the lucky lady, but:-

Would someone please consider taking over the Midlands and West area for NABO?

PASSWORDS

Any guidance papers or moorings tables still protected will open with password 'Branch' (Capital B)

The members-only website section has a **new password**, which has been sent out to on-line members via the members' bulletin list.

This is because many copies of NABO News have been given out at events with the old password in them.

If you have not been given the new word please e-mail:

webmaster@nabo.org.uk with your name, membership number (and type of membership if not 'full') to be given the password, and, if you want, to be put onto the bulletin list.

Adrian Stott on Adrian Stott

Elected to Council November 2002



"Adrian Stott spent part of his childhood in Hertford, on the Lee navigation, but his serious boating began when his family moved to Canada. He graduated from rowing with the Sea Scouts in Vancouver harbour to sailing among (North) Pacific islands and fjords, and eventually to a university break as deck hand on a tug on the Fraser River.

Talking fast during a holiday in England a couple of years later got him a student summer job as steerer of a pair of charter narrow boats, and a chronic case of inland waterways fixation. So, when he moved back to Britain in the 1980s, he bought and converted a Dutch barge, coincidentally now kept at Hertford but with which he has cruised in England and mainland Europe.

Adrian is a management consultant, advising on business organisation and procedures and the management of premises. He has been active in waterways since he was 17, and was a founding director of the Barge Association."

Advertisement

Advertisement

OH! JEBUS

“Not on your neddy, nor even your blopping board!”

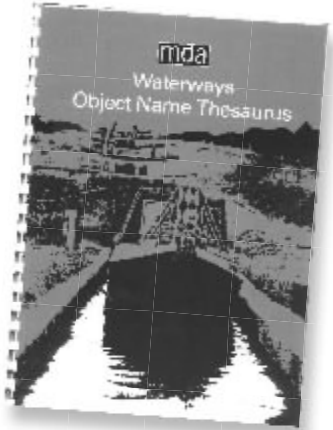
If you had the MDA Waterways Object Name Thesaurus you would soon know these words are not corruptions of other colourful words, they are real terms for things on our waterways.

There is a *Jebus* in Goole, languishing with a Tom Pudding outside the waterways museum. This Thesaurus defines it as ‘The bows of a train of compartment boats built as a separate craft’. A *neddy* is a ‘short towing mast found on keel boats’, and a *blopping board* is a ‘board fitted from the coaming top to the gunwales of keels to allow stones to be slid over the side’.

Now, did you know that BW experimented with tub boats on the BCN in 1957? There are all sorts of things you can learn from the 119 pages of this A4 comb-bound book, but don’t expect a gentle night-time read. This is a reference work, laid out in what they call a polyhierarchical manner, which is designed for speedy access to information, and is indented more like a computer script than anything to be read by ordinary folk. However the information is there, what the words mean, associated broader and narrower terms, non-preferred terms and related terms. If you don’t know what all this means, take as an example an ordinary word like *dog*. The ‘broader term’ would be *mammal*, a ‘narrower term’ might be *terrier*, a ‘non-preferred term’ might be *pooch* etc. How it works is explained in detail.

I wouldn’t class this as something every boater should have, but if you are interested in the waterways historically and need help with unfamiliar words or need to know the correct term for something, this is where to look. On a lighter note, if you re-create a game of ‘Call My Bluff’ in your local, or set waterway quizzes, producing this will soon put a stop to any argument!

Available from Lorraine Ablett, mda, Jupiter House, Station Road, Cambridge, CB1 2JD
Tel: 01223 315760 Email: lorraine@mda.org.uk



EXPLORING THE THAMES RING

This is a **free** 40 page A5 booklet prepared for NABO by Alex Jenkins Associates, financed entirely by advertising. As well as promoting our Association it gives useful maps and descriptive text covering the Thames, Grand Union and Oxford canals, and some handy cruising tips for the river from the Environment Agency.

Sequels are planned for the Leicester Ring and the West Midlands canals, so anybody who feels they would like to advertise or provide input regarding these areas please contact Alex (see his advertisement)

FOR YOUR FREE COPY - Apply to me or Gen. Sec. (48 Old Lane, Bramhope, Leeds, LS16 9AZ.)

Stuart Sampson



RIVERS



NEWS FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

The Environment Agency has published a discussion paper "Your Rivers for Life - A Vision for the Navigable Rivers of England & Wales" and responses are welcomed until the end of February 2003.

The Agency is the navigation authority for rivers in four of its regions (including Wales) and has recently acquired responsibility for the rivers Wye and Lugg. In addition to providing and maintaining the public right of navigation that exists on its rivers the EA also has a general duty to promote & facilitate navigation, and the enjoyment of the water environment.

Having had its navigation remit emphatically confirmed by the Government, the EA now seeks to amplify its vision for the navigations under its control and the discussion paper seeks to illustrate how navigation can create a public amenity, generate revenue for local economies and act as a catalyst for urban and rural regeneration. We have seen how BW has used its own waterways to achieve these aims and now the EA is following suit.

The Agency is finally taking its navigation role seriously and NABO (the only major organisation to support the EA in its quest to retain its navigations) will play its part in the process. We shall be seeking more involvement in EA navigation matters and consultations, and insisting that the committees charged with overseeing recreation and navigation (the so-called RFERACs) include members with knowledge and experience of navigation. In this regard, we are actively looking to nominate NABO volunteers to each regional RFERAC, even in parts of the country where the EA has no direct navigation responsibilities.

For many years the EA has operated under of welter of inherited legislation covering navigation on its rivers. Mostly, the laws applying to one region are incompatible with other regions so the possibility of one boat licence to cover all EA waterways has been an unattainable target. In recent years attempts have been made to interpret the legislation in a creative and flexible way to allow some reciprocal licensing but to achieve a harmonised navigation registration and licensing scheme the EA will soon be seeking a Transport & Works Order. Consultation with users is expected to take place in early 2003 and NABO will scrutinise the proposals very closely to ensure that boat owners are not disadvantaged by the "improved" licensing scheme.

The Agency is seeking consensus but if its proposals are opposed a Public Enquiry will ensue. We shall be pleased to hear from any members who wish to contribute to the debate.

Stephen Peters

RNLI completes busy first year on the Thames

*By Julian Gollogly,
RNLI Fundraising and
Communications Dept*



The Royal National Lifeboat Institution's Thames lifeboats were called out over 800 times during 2002 – their first year of service. This is almost three times as many as estimated prior to the setting up of the service on 1 January 2002. Callouts range from people in the water to submerged cars, dogs and their owners in difficulty and people cut off by the tide.

The RNLI runs four lifeboat stations on the Thames at Tower Pier, Chiswick, Gravesend and Teddington. The first three are manned 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in order to provide an immediate response. The fourth, at Teddington, is operated using volunteer crew in the same way as the RNLI operates its 230 lifeboat stations around the coast of the UK and Republic of Ireland.

In August 1989, the collision between the pleasure cruiser *Marchioness* and the dredger *Bowbelle* claimed the lives of 51 people and the Thames lifeboats were set up as a direct result of the River Safety enquiry conducted in 1999 by Lord Chief Justice Clarke.

The RNLI was asked by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) to provide a rescue service within 15 minutes to any point on the tidal Thames between Canvey Island and Teddington. The MCA co-ordinates the 999 search and rescue service from a Port of London Authority operations room at the Thames barrier.

“We are staggered by the number of callouts we had last year”, said Janet Kelly, the RNLI's station manager at Tower Pier lifeboat station. “We had only anticipated around 275 emergencies in our first year of service.” This number of incidents has resulted in Tower Pier and Chiswick becoming the RNLI's busiest stations.

An estimated 100,000 people use the Thames every day and with this in mind, Londoners are reminded to dial 999 and ask for the London Coastguard when making an emergency call. “Time is critical, particularly in life threatening situations, and the RNLI's response can be made much quicker by calling in this way”, according to Janet Kelly.

In many ways the Thames lifeboat service is repaying the generous support the people of London have long provided the RNLI. The London Lifeboat Day, held in March every year, being the main fundraising event in the capital. This year's London Lifeboat Day is Tuesday 11 March, the week of festivities beginning on Monday 3 March.

This appreciation was never more apparent than when the Tower lifeboat was called to Westminster Bridge to assist a man reported to be in the water at 10.30pm on a Saturday night in November. On arrival, the casualty was found clinging to the stone support of the bridge and starting to slip in and out of consciousness. The lifeboat crew recovered the man and quickly treated him for hypothermia. He was wrapped in warm blankets and given oxygen to keep him conscious until the London ambulance service arrived. Although the sea state was calm, the man was very lucky to survive, thanks to the speed of the rescue.

Operating inland

In addition to the Thames lifeboats, the RNLI already operates stations on inland waters. In 2001, the first opened at Enniskillen in Northern Ireland and the second at South Broads in Suffolk, initially as part of a pilot scheme for evaluation trials.

At Enniskillen, the large stretch of water extends across 50 square miles over two loughs which attract a high level of leisure activity including fishing, sailing, canoeing and over-the-water flying. At busy times over 600 people can be on the water each week. The station is served by an Atlantic 21 inshore lifeboat and a crew of eighteen volunteers.

South Broads lifeboat station has a D class inflatable lifeboat and an XP boat (a smaller powered inflatable developed for use aboard Trent class lifeboats). The smaller inflatable operates from a 4x4 vehicle, enabling the crew to travel to certain areas more quickly by road.

Since going live, both inland stations have performed a number of successful services. These include the courageous and lifesaving rescue of two people who had run aground on a large power cruiser on Lower Lough Erne, Enniskillen in stormy weather and very rough conditions. When the lifeboat arrived at the scene, Force 8 winds prevailed and the casualties were safely transferred from the boat.

It is estimated that over 250 lives are lost each year around inland waters – more than around the coast – and there are several thousand more potentially life-threatening incidents as leisure usage increases each year.



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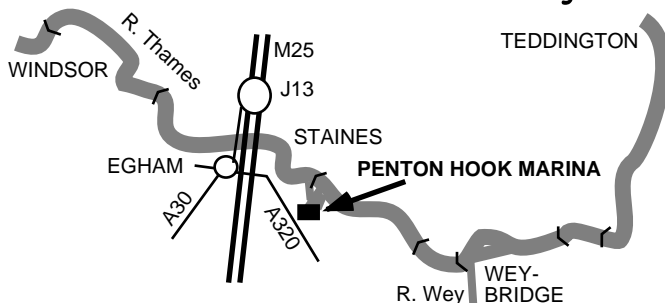
FREE 'Boats on Show' entry

Date: 16th/18th May

Contact: Adrian Stott

Tel: 07956 299966

Email: london.sec@nabo.org.uk



DON'T DELAY - SPACES LIMITED

FLY ON THE WALL



at Council

Flew back in to another Council meeting and my eye lighted on several new faces. It seems members are like light bulbs - all go out together!

The new members since I last sat on the wall are: David Harle - Treasurer, Peter White - Anglian Secretary, Adrian Stott - London Secretary, and Peter Lea.

Many old faces had reshuffled into new positions. Sue - Chairman (although she's sat there before), Trevor - Vice-Chair, Carole - General Secretary as well as NE Secretary and Aileen, Marketing and Events.

Roger felt he'd done his stint as membership secretary and it was decided that the administrative part of his job, i.e. membership renewal, could be done by someone paid, working part-time. Enter Melanie.

However Council is looking for a couple of people for specialist positions.

Are you that person? A technical person with a BSS specialism or an auditor for 2004? If you think you may be able to help get in touch with Sue or Carole.

BSS still hasn't gelled - will it ever? At the moment boats in the UK could be legal in Europe but not here at home!

NABO will continue to press for a regulator who covers ALL waterways. Did you know the Ombudsman covers only BW waters and is paid for by BW? AND had you heard that EA want to register ALL boats on their waters, on the privately owned waterways and marinas coming off their waters and on adjacent land and slipways? This would seem to be more like car registration than licensing, which is fund raising. EA could sometimes be at a disadvantage when BW could quote numbers of boats on their waters and EA does not have that information. Council will put views forward.

There was some discussion on boats which overstay on visitor moorings. There is no national BW policy on this (as you may have noticed!). It seemed to be more a problem of continuous mooring than cruising. Your Council will consider this problem and respond to BW.

And so to jollier things like rallies and a **Special Offer!** Moor in the Penton Hook marina during their 'Boats on Show' event, 16-18th May, for only £25 for the whole weekend including free admission to the event. Unfortunately this is limited to the first 20 boats that apply.

NABO will also have a stand at the Inland Waterways Exhibition in Birmingham (25-27th July) and the National Festival at Beale Park, near Reading (22-25th August). Council is sending a plea to any boaters attending other events by boat. Would you be

prepared to do a little publicity work for your Association and distribute leaflets to other boaters?

There are already offers for Little Venice, Crick and Bridgewater, all in May. Could you help out anywhere else?

This time it was dark when I unstuck myself from that wall.

Till the next time

Byeeeeee!



A Cracker Joke From BW's 40th Birthday Party?

QUESTION: When is a visitor mooring not a visitor mooring?

ANSWER: When there's an angler on it !

BW seem to have realised at last that, with the ever increasing number of boats, there is a need for more visitor moorings. BUT, they have leased out so much of the canal bank to angling clubs that they no longer have the right to give boats priority on those stretches. We already have to put up with fishing from lock landing stages and present visitor moorings, so it seems to me that it is a total waste of money constructing more moorings when we probably won't be able to moor on them. So, there'll still be a need for more moorings! We can't moor anywhere else, due to overgrown edges (assuming you can even see the edge) and lack of dredging, so obviously, the only course open to us is to drop anchor midstream parallel to these new moorings and wait for the angler to go away.

BW has celebrated its 40th birthday at the beginning of this year - life can't possibly begin until it opens its eyes.

C.S.

The message for NABO - This first came to our attention at local level, showing how vital it is that we attend Waterway User Group Meetings (Ed)

Dave's gone, what of the future?

A quandary is now facing amateur bookmakers in the rank and file of British Waterways, most of whom must surely have been taking bets on how many times David Fletcher would appear in the next issue of the Staff Journal *BW Monthly*. These lucky individuals, who must have made a killing in December when the total exceeded 30, must now decide whether to follow Mt Fletcher's fortunes in the IWA magazine *Waterways*, or transfer their allegiance to Mr Evans and stay with *BW Monthly*.

WHY DOESN'T SOMEBODY?

The survey said: 61% of you would like more articles of a practical nature. This feature might, if apathy doesn't rule OK, provide an outlet for those ideas which are too good to forget but you haven't the time, money or resources to develop.

Don't back off putting your name to an idea just because someone might have thought of it before, but let credit be where credit is due. We don't want to get into patent disputes here.

To get the ball rolling here are two I prepared earlier:-

WHY DOESN'T SOMEBODY make an engine drip collector out of flexible sheet?

Using a heat and chemical resistant tarpaulin type material made of, say, woven glass fibre sealed with silicone rubber, the sheet would be suspended under the engine using rigging wire. This would have the following advantages over a solid metal tray:-

- It could be fitted to existing boats without removing the engine.
- It would be easy to suck out the content, which would collect round the suction tube.
- It would swing if the boat heels and be more likely to retain its contents.
- It would float on bilge water and so be much less likely to be swamped.
- Its edge could be drawn up to adapt to the engine and transmission for better protection.

WHY DOESN'T SOMEBODY incorporate an air pressure operated gas valve into an LPG regulator?

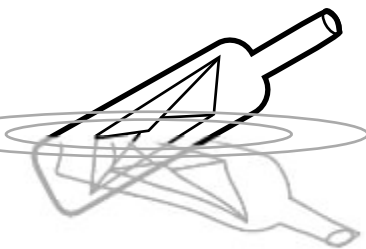
Some people are scared of gas on boats and may feel better if their gas system is not pressurised while not in use. However they may also have reservations about employing any electrical remote control to switch it off, nor might they wish to emerge in their night attire (however little that might be) to operate the master valve in the gas locker before making their first brew.

For them, Somebody could develop a remote control with a squeeze bulb or plunger coupled to a valve in the regulator by narrow bore tubing, which would lead from the comfort of the cabin to the gas locker. Some simple locking lever would be needed to keep the pressure on while the gas was needed, or perhaps some arrangement which would be needed to be operated once to maintain the supply for a limited time.

In addition the tube could be fitted with wax plugs distributed along its length which would melt in event of fire, releasing the air pressure and automatically cutting off the supply of gas at a point safe inside the gas locker.

If you make a fortune out of an idea published in NABO News, think of NABO's meagre funds !

LETTERS



One man's meat...

Christine Denton and yourself are fans of Dr David Fletcher's tenure of office. I read one comment on his retirement. It simply said that over his seven years in office he had increased the value of the balance sheet of the company quite significantly but had done little else. I think this last observation excessively flattering. I disagree with everything Christine has said. I usually spend the seven months, left me by BW, to cruise the system and know a number of staff, quite well. Foxton Incline that operated for just 10 years between 1900 and 1910 has no value to boaters nor to the heritage of the inland waterways. The millions to be invested in this idiotic proposals would be far better invested to benefit the canals by being placed at the disposal of those, who could then put into some effect, the Bio-Diversity Plan BW issued in 2000. BW and NABO should concentrate on what will benefit the aged who are the main group of users of the inland waterways in the coming two decades. If nothing is done to ease their travels and travails then BW will start losing a lot of customers.

I have a number of friends with off shore boats and they have the CA or

RYA to represent them. Frankly I can not see why they should not have another string to their bow as the likes of NABO. Most of them hold EA licences and some even Gold ones. Welcome is my view.

I think £15 membership cheap compared to the other groups. Think about life membership. I have this membership to both the IWA and RYA. I am also a member of the CA and therefore could, if I was bothered, which I am not, fly a defaced blue ensign. All three of them pay little interest in boater's problems on inland waterways.

Some of us are quite unaware of your intrusion of politics within the higher ranks of the NABO organisations. I have no idea or understand the problems with "poor James". I suspect the less said the better. I agree your time is better spent talking to the staff on the cut whose morale is lower than ever. They resent the increasing number of interminable meetings they have to attend. More, the fact that any wavering from the imposed line on any subject will blight promotion chances. One manager said he used to enjoy coming to work once!

A final point is that some moorings, not occupied by BW executives,

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being closed. Thrupp, on the Oxford, has a number of 24 hours places that are to be closed and that is just one example. This is what is in need of attention by NABO et al to reverse.

On the subject of charging in gear, I complain about the practice but it is easy for me with electricity at my mooring and cruising every day when I am out. The only exception is at Little Venice Cavalcade. It was here that a wise man told me that there was no difference to the requirement if you run the engine in forward gear or reverse. But to those boats moored behind you there certainly is "la difference". Always use reverse gear was his advice and very obvious too.

Louis Jankel

NB "MADAM" Shepperton.

Good idea - You can collect all the rubbish in the surrounding water this way and save it getting on to other folks blades! Ed.

Are kids that bad?

We do seem to have a very negative attitude towards young people. It is true that they have a tendency to hang around in large unruly groups, apparently trying to upset passing adults with their loud and often offensive language, but so what? Does that really constitute anxieties about calling the police and introducing "boot camps"? I think not.

I have cruised around the country, sometimes with my family, but more often on my own, and have never felt

threatened by the "unsociable" behaviour of young people occupying the bankside. That is not to say that life has been without it's incidents, but I have always found that by making the first friendly approach and engaging them in conversation, usually re-creates the situation into a more convivial one which removes the sense of hostility which so many people seem to fear. It is worth remembering that by far the majority of young people are not intrinsically anti-social, but because of their inexperience may be using rather crude methods to gain adult attention. I just try to make it positive attention rather than negative attention.

David

(This is one of many views in the 'Awareness' debate on our website)

Can BW stop bikers?

I have never been happy with the idea of BW and the IWA that towpaths are for bikers too (given that no matter what laws are laid down for them to dismount etc. it is us non bikers who end up getting out of their way - or risk injury). That said, it seems that, for anyone on a towpath (even bikers?), things may be about to get worse!

An item from our local daily of a couple of weeks back details a prosecution attempt by BW on a youth riding a 50cc scooter (moped?) along a (often busy) towpath in Welshpool. One presumes this riding was not a one-off occurrence and, from the

undisputed facts, they had the miscreant dead to rights. Yet the defence lawyer convinced the magistrates that such riding is so minor an offence as to be OK and he let the kid off. (Of course as he has a proper license and insurance etc. he could have ridden on the road but maybe the good gentlemen felt he (but not others) would be safer riding the towpaths!)

Given this judgement one wonders if 8W will bother with prosecutions in the future, maybe deciding that small powered bikes and scooters are OK on the towpath. (We have noted weekend boaters using powered scooters (not mopeds) to get back to their cars via the towpath since this case so...)

Mind you, I wonder if this relaxed attitude by/to the law is just a symptom of our times. After many years of boating it is only in the last few years, for example, that we have seen perfectly respectable boats arrive at short term moorings and, once tied up, they disgorge what can only be described as packs of dogs. Over the next many hours these rush about the towpath, completely unsupervised, frightening other towpath users. Obviously the owners of such dogs have no more regard for others on the towpath than our Welshpool scooter user or the Welshpool magistrates.

D.S.Cragg

More on flags and SSR

I was glad to see that you had looked into the subject of flags as I have from time to time had the conversation with fellow boaters in my marina. Unfortunately, you may think me a bit thick, and I'm afraid I am when it comes to the subject of flags. The article was very informative and obviously you only have so much room to write things, but it left me a little confused. If possible could you answer me a few questions?

1/ Wearing the ensign.... Where exactly on the vessel do you wear the ensign?

2/ I have been on the web and only seem to come up with the SSR (Small Ships Register) in Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man! Is there one on the mainland?

Charlotte Cheney
CC 'The Smokey T'

Stephen Peters replies

1. An ensign should be worn on a flagstaff at the stern of your boat.

2. The contact details for the Small Ships Register (SSR) are:-

Tel: 029 2974 7333
www.mcga.gov.uk/flag

To get a boat registered on the SSR you simply fill in the form and give details of the length of the boat, pay £10 and you will receive a registration document and be allocated an SSR number.

Hope this covers all the points you raised.

Fighting talk

I think after the "Fowle" comments made by owner of nb Heron in a recent NABO News it requires an opposite view. I joined NABO several years ago because I felt desperately unrepresented in dealings with BWB even though I was a long standing member of the IWA (still am) and I wanted a firmer approach taking with BWB (now BW) who, despite all recent accolades, are an old Company running their business feudally. It seemed to me at that time that the boater was an inconvenient appendage to canals and was to be deterred (I have not changed my view).

Our Association has, in my view, done an excellent job and still has a lot more to do for I believe the IWA does not now represent boaters in fact perhaps does not know in whose bed it sleeps and perhaps has taken the first steps towards takeover by the Waterways Trust in the future. If we are to be driven off the water by onerous rules and regulation and enormous increases in costs caused by forty years of BWB/BW mismanagement then I for one want a strong NABO to CONFRONT and CHALLENGE BW in each and every anti boater assault and I make no apology for saying so.

Finally may I ask you not to publish or divulge my name and address for I hope to continue boating for a few more years yet (as long as my pension lasts out) and do not wish to be institutionally blackmailed or victimised like continuous cruisers are.

Tribute to Roger Davis, and more..

Sorry you have decided to stand down, your renewal method is the best organised of the many organisations to which I belong, many thanks for your past work!

PLEASE NOTE: BW still do not get all boats licensed even in this day and age of lap top computers for the spot checking. More importantly they seem to do nothing about mooring discs, many boat owners do not have moorings officially and spend weeks or months on sites not recognised as temporary or long term and so do not pay, and moorings are far more expensive than licences! Another mooring scam: many on long term sites seem to think that "long term mooring" entitles the occupiers to live aboard as permanent residential and many freely admit they are not boaters but cheap livers with no interest in boats at all. Boatyards sell gas, diesel and provide free water to these people so won't say anything to jeopardise their business income!

My main grouse is that I pay for what I use on a very low pension, so why should others get away scot free! P.S. boats moored opposite mine do tend to stop the fishermen getting bait on my boat so I cannot have it all ways. One more thing, we should pay per foot length for both licence and mooring - not to the nearest metre - there is too much error. Thanks again, we'll meet one day.

Allan Lawrence
nb Latton, Enslow, S.Oxford

I see no ships!

When we were passing Dukes Cut in May 02, we noticed (just under the railway bridge) what looked like newly provided permit-holder moorings with water points, three I think. I say 'newly provided' because there were no boats on the moorings. I now find that a job offer requires that I be in the Oxford area for a while. However, when I phoned BW last year to enquire about moorings they said that there was a waiting list of over 100 for the Oxford Canal. I wonder if there are any NABO members in that area. If so can someone verify if there are now boats on these moorings? It would be interesting to know as BW are not always fully aware what the situation is. If someone could have a look for me I would be most grateful Thanks in advance

Second Meadow

JANEANDJOHN@ohara18.fsnet.co.uk

Spare the IWA

I find constant sniping at IWA counter-productive. I am a member of NABO and IWA and am well aware of shortcomings in both. Both organisations should work together and if or where they can't they should agree to differ and get on with it in their own ways.

Ron Bingham

This was directed at the mention of IWA's position in the 2/2/03 members' e-mail bulletin regarding the Waterways Regulator issue. That was meant for information only. Apologies to Ron and any others who interpreted it as anything else.

Not all black and white

Can someone tell me exactly what is meant by 'grey water', and if I have a boat built, do I need to worry about it?

Puzzled

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BOOKS AND CHARTS AT DISCOUNT PRICES FOR NABO MEMBERS

If you want to buy yourself a belated Christmas present don't forget that you can obtain books and charts published by Imray at preferential prices via our Rivers Secretary, Stephen Peters.

He runs a small-scale sideline business which is able to pass on discounts to NABO members on a wide range of waterway and navigational books, pilots and navigational charts. Best terms are obtained for large orders so why not buy in bulk for your club or friends?

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French waterways are now covered by the Editions du Breil series of waterway guides in addition to the popular Guides Vagnon and Navicartes.

Finally, the extensive range of Imray coastal navigation charts for UK, Europe, the Mediterranean and the Caribbean and Admiralty charts continue to be on offer at discount prices. Give Stephen Peters a ring or email for more details.

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