

# THE MAGAZINE OF THE



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

## ISSUE 4/03 - July 2003

**BSS Re-appraisal/Moorings Code**

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## 2003 CALENDAR

### Council meetings Copy dates

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 went from Little Venice Cavalcade to the Penton Hook Show – by boat. Weatherwise the event was dreadful. The tent got blown over as soon as it was erected and it was impossible to have a decent display. The punters stayed away, only just over 3000 in all three days. Some interest was shown and it was nice meeting the members who brought their boats. Penton Hook Marina was very welcoming, providing electricity, water and entertainment. We wait to see if this show will be held next year.

Next on my agenda was a meeting of the Parliamentary Waterways Group, where one of our members requested an independent Ombudsman. Stephen Edell stood and said that he was the ombudsman, he is independent but, yes, he is paid by BW and, yes, his powers were less than his predecessor and limited. This led to a useful conversation after the meeting. Mr Edell asked why, when he was getting plenty of inquiries about potential complaints, was he hearing nothing further. He has to tell all complainants to go through the BW complaints procedure and in my experience, most get fed up with getting half replies from BW and give up. Mr Edell is not happy with the system as it stands and wishes it to be speeded up. This is definitely good news.

Our member who raised the question was immediately invited to Watford to discuss his original issue – his concerns over mooring fees, and this is still ongoing, as it has been since the mooring matrix was abandoned.



Manning our stand at Crick Show was the first time I have been to this event as the WRG group I am involved with goes to Wendover who have a show on the same weekend. Our boat was at Wendover so I commuted daily. Many thanks to the members who assisted with the stall, especially in packing up as we made a very quick exit. It was a very enjoyable and profitable event.

A new broom is certainly sweeping clean. Robin Evans, the new BW Chief Executive, has not only overseen a new computer system, he has instigated a complete new management structure, and BW have a new phone system as well. All is not well with the computers, the teething problems that have affected licence renewals are being sorted and we were assured at the Boating Issues Meeting, on 19th June, that June and July reminders had been sent. This was disputed at the meeting as two people hadn't received theirs. I got back to receive a phone call from someone who hadn't received their May reminder, neither had their neighbour. Please contact us if you are still having problems after this edition of your News comes out. We have been assured that your prompt payment discount will not be affected by the delays.

We wish them better luck with the phone and management system.

The BW reorganisation is going ahead, people are leaving and being recruited, offices are being closed or

moved and hopefully things will be more streamlined and efficient. It isn't a new idea, it is just going back to how it was ten years ago, so I am told by those old enough to know.

NABO, and the other organisations, including the trade, who have become vocal on the campaign for a Regulator, are seeing it bearing fruit. BW are preparing a document for consultation on 'Consultation' in tandem with proposals to overhaul the Complaints and Grievances Procedure. We have as yet received no firm details about the Appeals Procedure that IWA have asked for, indeed IWA are asking BW to get their finger out as it is now six months since they first discussed this.

The Trial Moorings Code is causing great concern to our members and Council members. One council member who has had heart trouble had an overstaying letter stuck on his paintwork. His crime? He had been on 14 day moorings 4 days. Luckily because the higher up staff know him he was able to sort this, but he is still concerned that he won't get a licence next year. A member travelled to London to visit his family. After staying on one mooring for 14 days he realised his other family members lived within the same 'Place' so he left without seeing them.

We need examples of how this code is affecting your travelling. Are you ignoring it and hoping you don't get caught or are you altering your plans to comply? Please let us know. Also let BW know. BW have said that the response has been mixed but once again can't give any figures. The interesting thing is how can they test this code when for the first three months their computer hasn't worked properly.

We have now travelled from the Thames to Wendover and the Thames to Banbury. The only places we would have had difficulty mooring were Uxbridge and Thrupp. The latter because it was the first place we saw the grass cut to the edge and there is a very large boat club. We have again asked "What is the problem?" without receiving an answer. We are also finding that BW are lumping boats with no licences or moorings together with genuine continuous cruisers.

BSS examiners now have to be assessed to make sure their work is consistent. A word of advice from a member who did his boat examiner a favour by agreeing to allow his boat used for an assesment. DON'T. He found it a thoroughly unpleasant experience and it was only the thought that his examiner would have to go through it again that made him allow the inspection to continue.

After a boat fire at Wolvercote, the Oxfordshire Fire Brigade were going round fitting free fire alarms to boats, whilst we were in Oxford. The next morning we were awoken by the shrill tones of a fire alarm. Next door had burnt the toast!

Finally, to anyone awaiting a reply to a letter – Sorry! Will try to do better. I do appreciate you writing.

Gone Boating

*Sue Burchett*

P.S. I've heard that people are being given long term moorings without being on a waiting list, others are told they are on a list without having applied, and those patiently waiting don't know what is going on. If BW are using lists to fix mooring prices, how do we know if they are fair? Tell me if you have doubts about yours.

# NEW LICENCE AND MOORING REGULATIONS.

Some months ago I drew attention to the fact that a number of the canals were now “full”. I would now like to consider this in conjunction with the proposed new regulations as headed above, the two being linked, as congestion and lack of moorings have brought about the problem which British Waterways (BW) is attempting to address.

As of now, some 26,000 boats are registered by BW throughout the system and approximately 1,000 new boats are being built each year. Most of the “old” boats have gone following the BSS. Accordingly the current fleet is fairly stable and existing boats can be expected to be around for the next 20 or 30 years. New boats are tending to be longer (take up more mooring space) and cruising is becoming more “local” and “weekend”.

It is estimated that by 2007 the number of boats will be 30,000 and by 2112 34,000. This constitutes an extra 8,000 boats compared to today i.e. an increase of over a third, most of them requiring a mooring. Approximately 5% of boats at present have no permanent mooring, some of whom move regularly. Roughly 1% have “liveaboards”, who do not move i.e. not Bona Fide Navigating. Roughly 1% are just moored by the towpath for weeks or months either awaiting a mooring or not wanting one. Incidentally, it is this 2% that the new regulations are directed at, yet they now affect and restrict the other 98%. It has been estimated in the past by BW that their problems are caused by

no more than say 400 or 500 boats throughout the system. I believe the phrase “sledgehammer to crack a nut” would seem appropriate.

It is all very well trying to deal with the present problems but there also needs to be some long-term thinking and planning by BW – hopefully with input from the USER GROUPS.

Originally introduced where closures and repairs to canal restricted movement, winter moorings are now being offered on various sites throughout the system. NABO policy is that no more than 25% of the length of an existing short-stay visitor mooring should be so used for this. Many boats cruise the year round (we do pay a licence for a year of boating) and it is very irritating to find Visitor Moorings full in what one would expect to be a quieter period.

There would need to be a significant growth in patrol officers/wardens to implement the new regulations and police and manage the waterways. It is essential that information collected and collated by BW is correct if they are to successfully enforce the new regulations. I have already personally experienced an incident where having stayed for four nights at one location I received a notice that I had exceeded my 14 day limit. Apologies were extended and accepted. However this does not add to the credibility of any recording and such inaccuracies would leave BW open to challenge. As the new regulations specifically mention “nights”, it is obvious that any wardens/patrol officers must be certain

that a boat has indeed stayed or overstayed overnight during a particular period. Are wardens really going to be monitoring boats after seven in the evening and before nine in the morning?

As a result of the new proposed rules all boats now have restrictions placed upon them, e.g. they may only visit a specific area 14 days in any 42. Marina based boats departing Friday and returning Sunday may only leave their marina four times in six weeks. In addition a marina-based boat must “always be 10 lock miles from where it was 15 days ago”. I confess I do not understand this rule, but assume it was based on the complete misunderstanding and incorrect assumption that boats always stayed 14 days in a particular place. I have emphasized ‘MUST’, for although the document states “guidelines”, non-compliance incurs a penalty i.e. loss of licence. It seems perverse that measures being introduced and designed to get boats moving actually result in restricting movement of the vast majority of boats.

That BW has a problem is not in dispute. That the problem will grow is not only the result of lack of moorings but that new boaters are being told by BW that they will have to “continuously cruise”.

NABO have for some time been calling for a Waterways Regulator not only for BW but also to cover the Environment Agency and any other waterways. This need has become more obvious and urgent in view of the new proposed licence regulations and “appeal procedures” BW envisage. Any appeal procedure should be through a new

Waterways Regulator or a body or panel **independent of and without connection** to BW.

With regard to all of the above, NABO is in the process of formulating its own policy, which up to now has been restricted by conforming to the 1995 Waterways Act. In other words whatever we recommended had to be “legal”. I believe that many of our members have felt that NABO were not active enough in response to their wishes, whilst not appreciating the restrictions placed on us by the above. Accordingly, we are now considering extending our policy to include recommendations that may require new legislation. To that end we have instructed our solicitor to seek Counsel’s opinion on the proposed new license regulations:

With regard to their legality, i.e. do BW have powers under the existing act to enforce the above;

Any human rights aspect that may affect out members.

During the trial period of the new regulations, NABO is requesting of BW the following:-

That in NO CIRCUMSTANCES will BW in any way penalize any boater as a result of the trial of this code unless the said boater can be proven, using measures existing prior to 1.4.03, to have contravened the Law of the Land, and that BW will, throughout the trial, explain to NABO how the results are to be gathered and processed and make NABO party to such results and the deductions arising from them. In addition that BW will consult fully with all national User Groups any

changes that it proposes to make to the code or its implementation in the future. We also require that the trial will be done in such a way as to accurately reflect how the code would be applied **after** the trial period.

It would help NABO in formulating its policy to have response both to this article and the new licensing

regulations from our members. BW will consider amending their rules up to the autumn, so please respond not only to their questionnaire but to us as well. We need your views and input.

Thank you,

*Geoffrey Rogerson*

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## BRITISH WATERWAYS TO RE-ORGANISE

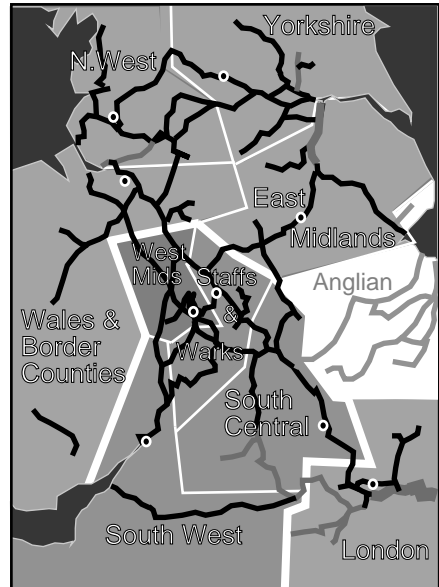
BW are merging their old ‘waterway’ offices into more self-sufficient ‘Waterway Business Units’, with in most cases each Unit covering two or three of the old waterway areas. The existing Regions will now be merged into just four: Scotland; North; South; and London.

How this will effect NABO will not be known until the consultation structure and User Group Meeting policy is revealed. Some Regional Secretaries could cover two units each, or non-Council representatives recruited.

Robin Evans, BW’s new Chief Executive, is adamant that the changes will bring more management staff to the ‘front line’, and reduce duplication of effort. He is also very keen to see much more consistency across the system, with boundaries between units becoming ‘seamless’. Long-serving BW staff will have a feeling of déjà vu, as the new map looks very like the Area Engineer structure of old, however the precise boundaries have yet to be finalised.

At first sight it seems to be much more logical, but we must wait until September to see the result. In the mean time our thoughts go out to those whose job prospects are in doubt and we hope that customer service does not suffer. After all, what Robin Evans insists is now an outdoor leisure industry is bound to be busiest in the summer months, and they have their new SAP and Clearwater I.T. systems to master too.

We wish them all the very best.



# WILL NEW ALCOHOL ACT HIT BOATING?

Just when we thought we had heard all the bad news concerning licensing the government's new legislation affecting sales of alcohol and public entertainment events will soon receive Royal Assent as the Licensing Act 2003. And even though not involving navigation licensing the new regulations are still likely to have repercussions for boaters.

The new law will shift the responsibility for liquor licensing from the licensing justices to district councils and London Boroughs, and will introduce an entirely new regime for all premises and events where alcohol is sold or where the public pay an entrance fee at sites where public entertainment is on offer. This means that boat rallies and festivals will need to be licensed by the local authority and it will not be a simple matter.

Temporary events used to require occasional licences or occasional permissions but the new law will require councils to control permitted temporary activities which will be limited to 3 days and an aggregate total of 500 persons attending. This could curtail boating festivals and possibly deter some groups from even organising such events.

The new law will also introduce new requirements for registered members' clubs and will restrict the use of their premises by outside groups. Boat clubs with a bar beware!

Finally, provision will be made to introduce licensing of vessels on inland waterways where alcohol is being sold, such as trip boats, etc. Previously the licensing laws did not apply to such craft once they untied and were under way.

The good news is that the fees for these permissions will be low but the bad news is that the bureaucracy is likely to make some people think twice before considering holding events if they are to be faced with complex notification and application procedures. Time will tell.

*Stephen Peters*

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## CAN BW'S BOOKING SYSTEM STAND THE STRAIN?

Reports from various members cruising the system this year seem to indicate that passage bookings for various structures and stretches around the system are not being handled with the efficiency one should expect.

Our Chairman was unable to contact Brentford Lock in order to leave the Thames tideway, and only succeeded after phoning Eugene Baston, Customer Relations Manager at Headquarters. BW staff failed to turn up for our Editor's accompanied passage into Liverpool even though the booking was confirmed the previous day, and confusion and lack of communication between 'shifts' have been reported at offices handling Standedge Tunnel, Ribble Link and Rochdale '9' passages.

Nobody has complained of staff being unhelpful or unpleasant, but doubts have been expressed whether the BW internal communications system would stand the test if challenged with having to organise hospitality in a beer factory.



## **NEW REGULATIONS FOR SALES OF RED DIESEL FUEL**

New regulations affecting dealers selling red diesel and kerosene which are subject to a rebated rate of fuel duty came into effect in April 2003. If you buy diesel fuel for your boat you may have experienced the new regime which a number of boatyards seem to be applying incorrectly.

The new rules have been introduced to crack down on people who use rebated fuels illegally in road vehicles, and special arrangements are now in force including registration, record keeping and monthly returns to HM Customs & Excise by registered dealers in fuel oils.

The rules relating to sales of red diesel to pleasure craft are really very simple. Marina and boatyard supplies of any quantity direct into a pleasure boat fuel tank require no additional records beyond those held for the purpose of conducting the business. It is not necessary for the fuel seller to take details of your name, address, stated use of the fuel, etc.

The same rules apply to red diesel sold in loose cans for supplies not exceeding 100 litres. Larger quantities dispensed into cans or other containers will require more detailed mandatory information from the customer to ensure the end use is legitimate.

Members may find that previously obliging boatyards will now refuse to dispense small quantities of red diesel into loose cans, claiming that the regulations prevent them from doing so. This is incorrect and depending on how well you know them you may wish to question their procedure. They may simply refuse to serve you, of course!

More information can be found in Excise Notice 192 or on the HM Customs & Excise website [www.hmce.gov.uk](http://www.hmce.gov.uk)

*Advertisement*

## WORRIED WOMAN of the WATERWAYS

I sometimes ask myself if there is 'N'y thing that I don't worry about? Me I can worry about **nothing!** I do worry about nothing, the nothing that gets done regarding problems and complaints to various waterway authorities. They tell you that they have - 'input these to our works database in which we log all work. All work has to be given a priority as I am sure you will appreciate. It will be undertaken in a logical order according to the criteria that we use. Obviously there is not a finite amount of funding, so we have to prioritise carefully.' Sounds good eh? I worry about what all that means. I suspect it means that nothing will be done in a practical sense nor is likely to be done for some considerable time, if then. A job existing on a database is not a job done.

**Nostalgia** (well even that isn't what it used to be!). You often hear people telling us about the 'good old days'. I worry that their memory may not be too accurate and they are looking back through 'rose coloured spectacles'! Yes the canals were much better maintained in the days of the working boats, but to hear people say that the water was cleaner is just not true. The water wasn't churned up by propellers when most boats were horse drawn and in rural areas it looked clearer, but it certainly wasn't cleaner! Everything was thrown in the water. In rivers it flowed away but not so on canals. In some areas the water was thick with pollution from industry and all other rubbish. No boatman let his ropes get into the water as they would get covered in evil oil and become most unpleasant and difficult to handle.

Have you seen the things that BW were selling as Nostalgia items? These include canal 'furniture' such as mile posts and bridge numbers. I worry that once it is advertised how much these are worth some unscrupulous types will start helping themselves. How can you tell if they were bought or purloined?

How can I worry about **non-slip** surfaces? These are excellent and can be found on lock gates and footboards, but only in some areas. I worry that the word hasn't been spread around. Why don't you contact your local office and suggest they install these surfaces? Non-slip surfaces make things so much safer, so nudge them along into doing something about it.

Now for **Notices** - should they be called 'ignores' as there are so many of them about we are suffering from 'overkill' and don't notice them? There are many unnecessary ones. There are huge notices telling you how much money was spent on some project or other, which make you think 'Yes, and a few hundred pounds of that money went to pay for this notice!' I could give many examples of daft notices but will limit myself to two of my favourites. These

are on the River Nene. One says 'Do not enter this lock until you have checked the gauge downstream'. The reason you are reading the notice is because you are in the lock! The other in a lock says 'No Swimming' to which has been added 'If you fall in Just Drown'.

I worry about a certain **Narrow** canal that has recently been reopened. Millions of pounds have been spent on the new bits, but the state of the rest of it is really going downhill fast. The paddle gear is in poor condition and some locks very hard to work. 'It's because the locks are so deep and the paddles large' I am told. Well how come some of them that are the same size are easy to work? The anti-vandal locks need repairing and modernising too. There are lovely new sanitary stations but there is nothing provided for you to tie your boat to. (I did hear that BW have a load of bollards but haven't got round to putting them in yet).

My biggest worry about **navigation** is how much waterway authorities consider it in their operations - very little it seems. See their list of activities and priorities and navigation is very low down, if there at all.

Do I worry about **NABO**? Well, mostly I think that council members work very hard and are dedicated to seeing that us boaters get the best possible deal. They negotiate to keep navigation at the head of the lists of waterways authorities' priorities. I do worry that perhaps there is not enough input and feedback from members. Do we, the membership, ask ourselves. "What more can I do?" Do we keep council informed of local goings on or the problems we would like to see addressed? I worry that we elect a council and think they are NABO while in truth we, the members are. If you worry about what they do, I suggest you offer to assist!

Well my dears, enjoy your boating and leave the worrying to me!

Your friend WWW DOT

*Advertisement*

*Suits and frocks and mayoral chains,  
Bunting, cheering and parting of tapes...*

The 'Impossible Dream' had come true, a boat - yes, **BOAT** - had traversed the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. So, now a year or so on, has the 'editorial office'.

Only when you cruise the canal yourself do you appreciate the amount of digging, rock-bolting and piling, and the sheer ingenuity and hard work that has gone into turning a 'disused' canal, that was still useable for walking, angling and cycling, into a route open to us with boats. In terms of hard labour, the work still goes on on behalf of us boaters. The manpower needed to sheath boats and drag them through the Standedge Tunnel, with a man per boat fending them off the train-soot blackened rocks for up to three hours in the dark, and then escorting the convoys on each side, plus dealing with leaking lock-gates etc. etc., is beyond belief. All credit to BW, HCS and all their partners.

You may by now be wondering if I have been subject to some divine conversion 700 feet below the Pennines, having written a whole paragraph without a word of criticism!

I must add a word of warning though – towpath telegraph can make or break a canal like this - and if boating on the canal is not reported as pleasurable then the extra passing trade promised to the investors may not materialise.

It is vital that the waterway management doesn't rest on its laurels and go on saying that casual mooring over much of the length of the canal is impossible due to a 'build feature' that cannot be rectified. If they can tunnel under Bates & Co then surely they can dredge a few hundred metres to the edge here and there, for instance around Appleyard Bridge, so boaters leaving Huddersfield don't have to pass through two 'Mooring Code Places' before they can tie up for the night.

I say to BW, "*Keep up the good work and don't let the ship be spoiled for a ha'porth of tar*". To boaters I say, "*Give it a go. Your crew might have to walk between locks as there are few landings, but the scenery is superb and the engineering impressive. It is a very useful route to Yorkshire avoiding the Trent and the Manchester conurbation.*" – and I am duty bound to say Yorkshire is worth coming to!

And finally – congratulations to Leeds & Liverpool West, who cut towpath vegetation right to the edge. All users can see where they can safely tread, prams and bikes can pass, and boaters can alight without fear of a broken ankle. Let's see more like this.



*Stuart Sampson, Editor – NABO News*

## NOTICES

### POST FOR NABO NEWS

The Editor will be afloat for issue 5/03 so please send items on paper to NABO FREEPOST (BM8367), Birmingham B31 2BR

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

### FREE BOOKLET

'Exploring the Thames Ring'



No longer available by post, sorry! Pick one up at our show stands



### LIFE (AFLOAT) BEGINS AT 40!

Congratulations to the Residential Boat Owners Association, who are celebrating their 40th anniversary at Kingston-upon-Thames on the 26th July.

All past and present members welcome, contact Ivor Caplan, Chairman for more details on Mobile:07778 685764 or by email: [ihjcaplan@aol.com](mailto:ihjcaplan@aol.com). The AGM starts at 2.00pm, followed by a talk by Dave Fletcher. The evening will see us celebrating late into the night.

Seen on boat:-  
"Professionals built the Titanic, amateurs built Noah's Ark"

**PLEASE - PLEASE - PLEASE**  
Tell us if your address has changed. We can't afford our PAID administration lady chasing up membership matters with folks who have moved and not told us. It needn't cost you even a stamp - use the FREEPOST address.

### PASSWORDS

Any guidance papers 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](mailto:webmaster@nabo.org.uk) with your name and membership number to be given the password, and, if you want, to be put onto the bulletin list.

# RE-TESTING THE TESTS

## The BOAT SAFETY SCHEME STANDARDS APPRAISAL

NABO's long and hard battle to see the BSS simplified may at last be coming to an end. or at least seeing the end of the beginning.

The much maligned BSS Review Report of 2001 did in fact recommend that the number of mandatory requirements should be kept to a minimum '*consistent with achieving the objectives and responsibilities of the navigation authorities*', and that they should be expressed simply and be capable of consistent application. Even though the resulting revamp was condemned by NABO as '*just tinkering round the edges*', it now appears that a full re-appraisal of the standards is being conducted.

Again the BSS Office are setting a tight schedule, with another London Boat Show relaunch planned for 2004. NABO representatives fear this might not give time to complete the work and point out that, after so much criticism was levelled at the last attempt, it might be better to wait till the full appraisal is complete before finalising a date.

In addition to the interaction of the three committees running the scheme plus the work involved in preparing the results for the launch, each of the hundreds of criteria that boats have to pass are themselves now to be tested on thirteen counts, and given scores.

Significant on the list are scores indicating whether each requirement:-

- is risk based and founded on known hazards
- has a cost of compliance proportionate to the risk
- is communicable to owners, trade fitters and BSS examiners
- is capable of being applied consistently.

The standards are also being compared with the requirements of the Recreational Craft Directive.

To help with this, a risk-based model has been created by a firm called Advantage Technical Consulting, using available data for reported incidents relevant to small craft.

Everyone knows that the BSS has had a severe credibility problem ever since its creation, but if the checklist is pruned so as only to contain items that can be justified according to these factors, then hopefully the Scheme will earn the respect of NABO members as well as the many others who have campaigned for this full re-appraisal.

Boat safety is important, NABO has never said otherwise.

# SOLID FUEL STOVES – CAN YOU HELP?

One David Fuller from the BSS office has asked for NABO's help. (and that means you!) to gather statistics regarding solid fuel stoves. This is particularly pertinent after the sad death last winter of a couple on a boat who were overcome by carbon monoxide, most likely from a stove. In his letter to our Vice Chairman he said:-

*I would be grateful for your own personal input and if you could collate contributions from other NABO members with an interest in this field. In particular I would be grateful for assistance with:*

- Details of known fires and/or other incidences relating to, or caused by, solid fuel stoves.*
- Details of any stove experts, or companies, who you feel may be helpful to the project.*
- What installation instructions and parameters are used when stoves are installed by professionals.*
- What installation instructions or guidance is given to private individuals for the DIY installation of stoves.*
- In your opinion what percentage of inland waterway boats are currently fitted with solid fuel stoves.*
- What would you consider the average life expectancy of a stove to be.*
- What percentage of new stoves are being installed as new installation as opposed to as replacements for existing stoves.*
- What percentage of new stoves are being installed by professional as opposed to private owners.*

Your help could be a life-save. If you have anything to offer please contact Trevor (Details on the back cover)

*Advertisement*



# RIVERS



## **GLOUCESTER DOCKS OPEN FOR RIVER CRAFT**

Recent changes to the scope of the BW river-only registration certificates has led to some confusion on the River Severn with an edict being sent out to customers by the Waterway Manager advising that craft would not be permitted to enter the docks at Gloucester without paying extra for a licence.

NABO immediately questioned this ad hoc re-interpretation of nationally agreed concessions, and consequently the restriction on using Gloucester Docks has been rescinded.

To avoid any more confusion the situation now is that all craft having a river registration certificate (as opposed to a full canal and river licence) may enter Gloucester Docks from the River Severn and will be permitted to moor between the lock and Llanthony bridge for a period of 14 days. A free mooring will be provided for the first 48 hours (subject to availability). Nightly mooring charges will then apply after the first 48 hours

We are pleased that the situation has been clarified at last. And next time you enter the docks for a short stay, it is thanks to NABO.

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## **BOOKING THE RIBBLE LINK**

People may forget that England's newest canal, the Ribble Link, can only be used in conjunction with three adjoining tidal watercourses, and so may wonder why booking so far in advance is required, seemingly just to use a few newly constructed locks.

The rivers Douglas and Ribble, plus Savile Brook, can only be navigated when tides are high enough, and at a suitable time of day, so there are about seven days in every month when no passage can be made. Even when it can, winds over force 4/5, poor visibility and other factors can make it unsuitable for canal craft. Boats are only allowed to go one way each day, so inbound and outbound transits to the Lancaster Canal are usually, but not always, on alternate days.

BW book boats in convoys of three, but up to six can be accommodated, presumably giving leeway for postponements. Now that there is no charge for passage, demand is so high that several months' notice may be required.



## NABO INVOLVED IN STOPPAGES CONSULTATION

Last month, I represented NABO at the National Stoppage Meeting, at which the works programme for the winter period 2003-2004 was discussed. The other organisations represented were: AWCC (cruising clubs), CBOA (commercial boats), RBOA (residential boat owners), APCO (hire boats), and IWA.

Initially, we were asked about the layout of the booklet, all present being in favour of a canal by canal listing, instead of the region by region listing of last year (which had meant that some canals appeared in more than one section). Additionally, there will be a column to refer to the appropriate map.

Then onto the stoppages themselves. My criteria were: 1) does the proposed work justify the length of the stoppage, and 2) if the closure blocks the waterway for a significant period, is there an alternative route around it. Comments were made about many of the works listed, and at this point, it is impossible to say whether they will have any effect, but I was impressed that BW had taken note last year, so that appropriate changes were made between the draft and final documents.

Now the bad news. BW has committed itself to eliminating the backlog of safety-linked maintenance by the year 2004. Next year is 2004, so the stoppage programme looks horrendous. The northern waterways appear to be all but closed between November and next March, apart from local boating in some areas. But, the future looks brighter. After the reorganisation, if I have understood rightly, funds will be allocated on an area basis rather than on a local one, which means that it could be possible for BW to close a waterway during one winter season in order to have a full blitz on it. This would mean that a great stride would be made in improving the infrastructure, and it would be fully open with no stoppages for the next few winter seasons. Additionally, it was suggested that it could make economic sense to replace both sets of lock gates at the same time, eliminating the need for two stoppages in the same place.

Of course, there is the Forth Bridge aspect. There will always be work to be done.

*Carole Sampson*

*Advertisement*

# BORIS THE BLOODHOUND

I'm Boris, t' blood'ound. I've bin snoozin under t' table for some time now, and I'm sick and dog-tired of that flippin Fly buzzin' past me ears, so ~ I've swotted it with me paw and now it's lyin in corner, pantin', with its feet in t' air. The snag is that, as a pennance, they've told me that I've got to tell you what's goin' on cos Fly can't. I'll get t't bottom o' thins for ya.

Someone's 'ad a novel idea that there should be space left at water points so's a boat can use 'em, and someone else reckons t' Ee-ay has more people carrying clip boards than fixin thins on the Neen. On the Store and Why, it seems that Ee-ay's idea of navigation is jus' canoes, which means no powered craft: I think they're barkin' up t' wrong tree, but I'm alright, cos I do doggie paddle. Any road - me in a canoe? I'd be feet up like Fly wi' canoe on top.

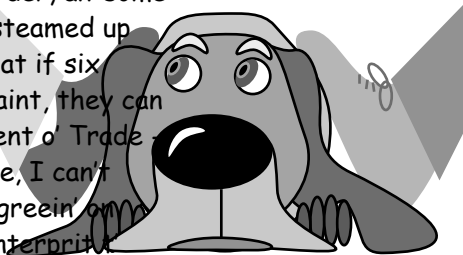
There's somethin' called the Ee-ay Transport n Works order, an' some of Council are really steamed up about it. It seems that if six boaters have a complaint, they can take it to t' Department o' Trade - judging by this lot 'ere, I can't imagine six boaters agreein' on anythin'. An if u misinterpret

registration conditions, u's be a criminal.

BW is reorganisin', back to what it used to be before they reorganised before. Market 'arborough, which is further south than Foxtan (fox - where, let me at it!) was in the north and Foxtan in the south, now they's both in't south, Leads (I 'ate em) is bein' moved from northwest to Yorkshire, and BW promise it will all be seamless and better. Summat to do with the Iraq war.

There's good news about BSS! After't relaunch, your gas fridges will be OK, but not now, so u shud take 'em out, buy a new one, and on the relaunch date, u will know that u've wasted your time an money. This is good news?

Tesco don't want to look after NABO's funds as it is an organisation - isn't all money money? - , an' cheeky ole BW want to see what u see on t' NABO website, an' read Council minutes.



Is this some sort of wag? Is it April? That got t' longest an loudest laugh. Its enuff ta mek mi growl.

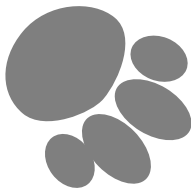
Business barges are appearin in London n' Birmingham, praps we'll see two an three storey ones. If there's no engin', will it be a houseboat, or will it 'ave to move to a new place every fourteen days, or will it ave its licence removed cos it hasn't done some new lock miles every month? Meks ya wonder dunnit? An will ya news editor hav a problem cos 'is office floats in t' summer?

Council members ave bin talkin to each other in e-mails - I've 'eard of p-mail but not e-mail. T Waggon 'n 'orses is redoin its menu: but I'm alright cos faggots 'n chips is still on.

Must go, gotta see a dog about a man. Save a biscuit f' me.

Ya best frend

Boris



Home Sweet Home

*Advertisement*

# LETTERS



## What's Wrong with it?

Surely I cannot be the only person who cannot understand what all the fuss is about the proposed Moorings Code. Whilst I agree that NABO should be keeping tabs on such things as excessive charging for moorings, and unrealistic requirements of the Safety Regulations (the reason I joined NABO in the first place). it seems to me that by claiming that the Moorings Code is, in itself, unreasonable is exposing NABO to being regarded as a group of whingeing nutters

Maybe I have failed to see some evil hidden agenda in the Code, but I cannot for the life of me see what is unreasonable about expecting people who are supposed to be "cruising" to move a distance of at least 120 lock-miles in three months. That is only 10 lock-miles a week, a distance that any normal boater could cover in 3 or 4 hours. Anyone who is not prepared to cruise for 3 or 4 hours a week does not deserve to be called a "cruiser" at all, but is in fact more likely to be the sort of "live-aboard

layabout" that the Code has surely, been planned to remove from our waterways. I seem to remember not all that long ago that NABO was moaning about people who simply live on boats, but never actually go anywhere, and who simply clutter up legitimate moorings that we, the "real cruisers" would like to occupy for the odd night or two.

Now, I am not the owner of a flashy, up-to-the-minute narrowboat, but have a rather elderly GRP cabin cruiser. What is more, I generally cruise single-handed, but that has not stopped me from covering, 300 miles, and 200 locks, in less than 3 weeks. (that's around 25 lock-miles per day) and still having plenty of time to sight-see en route. (and no, I do not exceed the 4mph speed limit, even when overtaking certain narrowboaters who seem to think that anyone doing more than one and a half miles per hour is a speed merchant!)

By all means, let NABO campaign over issues of injustice, bad management, obsessive "jobs-worth" attitudes by petty officials, and

such like. But please do not expose the whole movement to ridicule by opposing what, to me, appears to be a very reasonable proposal. Let those who want to keep their boats in the same place for most of the time do what the rest of us have to do - namely get themselves a proper mooring and pay for it. Whilst there may be a shortage of such moorings in the overcrowded South-East.

there are plenty of reasonably-priced marinas up here in the East Midlands within easy reach of the M1, which whilst it may involve some travel by car is surely as viable economically as taking expensive moorings in the London area. For what it is worth, the owner of my own small, privately-operated marina, which is about 10 minutes from the motorway, has been bemoaning the fact that he has several vacant berths; and that on one of the cheapest moorings in the area, despite being totally secure, having its own boat club and reasonable facilities

So let's have some common sense about the Moorings Code, and accept that, in this case, British Waterways are trying very hard to give us what we have been asking for for a long time - stopping people from using our waterways as a cheap place to live in semi squalour

Peter Brookes.

## Another view

The Moorings Code is a genuine, but perhaps misguided, attempt by BW to combat selfishness on the waterways. We must admire them for this, especially when instead they could be seeing those who want to just live on the waterways as another business opportunity to be milked.

## No longer a boat owner

...The canals have changed so much since I started boating in the 1960s I no longer find the same pleasure in the present day climate of ever increasing regulations and exploitation of anything that BWW can turn into money.

As a founder member of the Association I do wish NABO all the very best for the future. You will be needed all the more in the years ahead since I am afraid that things are going to continue to get worse...

From a resignation letter to NABO

## Hi Ed

Ah'm worried, really worried, abaat Dot. She's worryin an worryin an worryin. She'll end up wi a ulcer or worse. Dun't she know that boatin's supposed ta bi relaxin an enjoyable, an fun?! She needs ta see t funny side o thins.

Boris

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