

THE MAGAZINE OF THE



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

ISSUE 6/04 - October 2004

BW Accountability / AGM / BW's 'Veg Pledge'

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Chairman's Column **Stuart Sampson**
5 He who pays the piper . . . **The Chairman**
6 Books **Carole Sampson & S.P.**
7 Rough guide to boating groups
8 The Good Old Days? **Stephen Peters**
10 The BW Veg Pledge
11 Angry Anglers
12 Worried Woman of the Waterways **WWW Dot**
14 The Great Gate Debate
<< Pullout AGM Supplement >>
15 Notices
16 Rivers **The River Users Co-ordinator et al.**
18 Silly ideas **The Mad Propessor**
20 Lavender Blues? **Stuart Sampson**
21 Sea Cadets to merge **Stephen Peters**
22 Fly on the Wall **Fly**
23 Letters **Yourselves**
26 NABO supplies
27 Council contacts

2004 CALENDAR

**Council Copy
meeting date**

Nov 13th A.G.M.

Nov 27th Dec 4th

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



When you read this we will all be enjoying the season of mists and mellow leafiness on our blades, but I started writing this in glorious weather at the beginning of our third cruise of the year. We had just 'oversummered' the boat at Barton Turns and used her as a base while commuting to the National Waterways Festival by car.

The N. W. F.

I have always had mixed feelings about events like the 'National'. At least two people have to put in a day fetching and rigging the stand, four days either waiting about or trying to be nice to visitors, and another day taking it all down again and returning it to storage. Is it worth it?

On paper, no. We fielded many enquiries from would-be boat buyers looking for a cheap place to live but only recruited a handful of members and handed out a leaflets to a few more who would think about it. Most boaters there are seasoned regulars who have already had ample opportunity to decide whether to join.

However it is important to 'be seen'. On the Saturday I was invited to the IWA "Chairman's At Home", a gathering of various big-wigs in the IWA marquee before the official opening. This was quite a useful opportunity to improve on the 'who-you-know' and study the psychology of dress. The IWA National Chairman, as host, was in a light grey suit, not



too formal but showing suitable respect for his guests and the occasion. Needless to say the mayor was in suit and chains and a lot of the others were in 'rally uniform', the inevitable logo emblazoned tops, but there was no way of identifying the more senior representatives of the navigation authority at a distance. I don't remember them looking like casual visitors at the London Boat Show, so why treat the major waterway event of the year as just another day out? Maybe a business suit would be a bit out of place but something like a blazer or jacket might have helped distinguish them as being people worth talking to. Maybe they didn't think they were!

At the rally I was disappointed to learn that last year's chairman, Sue Burchett, has left NABO altogether and so will be unlikely to be reading this. She is hoping to do much more 'campervanning' and so has a whole new choice of associations to join, so feels she has done enough for the association and that is certainly true. We wish her well.

However one of other the reasons she gives is the lack of help from members, which is also plainly evident. A number of members came up to us and praised us for what we did, which is very welcome, but offers to give us a break were limited to less people than I have digits on one hand. Those I thank profusely, as well as those who made our presence at Saul possible.

THE A.G.M.

Also regarding contribution from members, we have an AGM coming up with elections and the like.

We have seen the year through with a smaller Council. Although I don't think we have lost the diversity of boating styles represented, which is good for the decision-making body of NABO, it would be even better if we could be up to full strength next year. There are still too many boat owners out there who don't appreciate the value of NABO or even that it exists. We also need to consider those members who are either not getting the service they deserve or think the Association is still about to founder through personality problems on Council.

I can assure everybody that meetings are positive and harmonious, and that anyone prepared to stand or be co-opted would be most welcome, especially anybody who can contribute towards attracting more members and ensuring present members are content to stay with us.

IT-ALL

One thing that is worrying me, and, I would think, a lot of other boaters, is Robin Evans's policy of bringing 'it-all' to the waterways. He calls it vibrancy, but what do we know it as?

Please excuse a little non-rhyming 'verse' -

IT-ALL includes:

A jogger pounding towpath before light is in the sky,

The thunder of the bikers on their way from pub to pub,

The two hours clutching rope while you queue to use the lock,

The parents of the toddler stoning ducks before he's three,

The booming beat from night clubs in the small hours of the morn,

The clutter of the signage where the message takes third place,

Designer fashioned lock-sides where the heel grips can't be reached,

Them skimming surface rubbish missing all that lies beneath . . .

Want to get away from IT-ALL? You want somewhere quiet where there are no cyclists, neatly cut grass round all the locks and moorings? Where signs are all visible, legible from at least 20 yards and devoid of corporate logos or puzzling pictograms? Where the locks all work and boaters' facilities are no further than three hours cruising apart?

Try the Avon Navigations. On the Upper Avon you are hardly aware of who looks after it, it is just there for you to enjoy. If 'amateurs' can do it, why can't the professionals?

REPORTS BOARD

I am pleased to say that when you read this I will have set up posting forwarding to the EA regions and the Avon Navigation Trusts.

I am also pleased to see BW actively participating. Long may it continue!

May your road be good.

Stuart Sampson

HE, WHO PAYS THE PIPER...

At the National Waterways Festival, NABO set about collecting more signatures for the independent waterways regulator petition and it was surprising how many people came to the association's stand specifically to sign. The BW Chairman would, no doubt, question whether they knew what they were asking for, but the message is clear – **boaters still do not trust BW to operate without outside scrutiny**, and that whoever is chosen to scrutinise, it should not be a piper playing a tune of BW's calling.

Your chairman put this sentiment to the BW Annual Meeting on 16th September. He asked how BW proposes to convince its customers that its '*Openness and Accountability*' proposals will solve the mistrust. George Greener returned the serve by extolling the virtues of IWA's Bulletin and NABO News as potential vehicles for getting the message across. Since he has in the past been known to denigrate this magazine (we believe the word 'drivel' was used), he will have a job persuading the Editor that a publication financed and created by NABO members should be used to promote BW's case.

However the news isn't all bad. So far only two of these proposals have been implemented to any degree. BW says the new complaints procedure is working well (your views?) and consultation meetings are being given a make-over.

The other two proposals, the revamp of the Ombudsman scheme and the National Consultative Council (NCC), have both now been given a kick start by the appointment of Professor Jeffrey Jowell Q.C. as Chair for both the 'arm's length' Ombudsman Selection Committee and the NCC Inaugural Committee. BW are confident that he is a man of sufficient integrity and independence of thinking to satisfy the demands of its critics.

The NCC Inaugural Committee will have members representing six user groups: the RYA, the Ramblers Association, IWA, BMF, someone from angling – and NABO. This is heartening as the number of user groups/stakeholders that may eventually be represented on the NCC could exceed forty and for our association to be in on its birth speaks highly of our standing as **the** organisation representing private boaters. The purpose of this committee is to decide how the NCC will work and is expected to achieve this in four meetings this autumn/winter. There may be doubt as to just how valuable the NCC will be, but there is no better way to find out, and help shape it so it can be effective, than being directly involved.

It is true that BW has a wealth of opinions coming in, many conflicting, from its users and customers, and there are cases where a prior discussion between the groups would benefit all, either by reinforcing common ground or ironing out differences that allow BW to 'divide and rule'. This is where the NCC could help, and, if it gained sufficient respect and thereby power and influence, maybe it could provide some of the scrutiny that boaters clearly want.

Book Review

GOING IT ALONE



- is a guide to working a narrowboat single handed.

Colin Edmundson gives a wealth of useful tips, many of which can be of use even when you have a crew, and who knows when your kids will be ill or your partner goes on strike?

The A5 sized book has 28 pages, in other words is about the size of this magazine. There are clear sketches and diagrams to illustrate the points. He firmly believes the answer is to take your time, and, although BW does not recommend single handing as safe, with a little care there are few places one cannot travel this way.

I would recommend this as £4.50 (inc P&P) well spent. Make your cheque out to Colin Edmundson and send your order to:-

The Wandering Boater, c/o 94 Vale Road, Woolton, Liverpool L25 7RN
(Tel: 07721 620747). Expect the book within 28 days

Carole Sampson

Some other books of interest to inland boaters

Members may be interested in the following publications that have come to our attention via the book review section of the Journal of the highly respected Railway & Canal Historical Society:

"Canal Boatmen's Missions" by Wendy Freer and Gill Foster
- RCHS ISBN 0901461 53 9 £12.50

"The Cromford Canal" by Hugh Potter - Tempus Publishing
ISBN 0 7524 2802 0 £12.99

"The Montgomery Canal & its Restoration" by Harry Arnold - Tempus Publishing
ISBN 0 7524 1660 X £12.99

"The Canal & River Sections of the Aire & Calder Navigation" by Mike Taylor - Wharnccliffe Books
ISBN 1 903425 37 9 £9.99

"Shipping on the Humber" by Mike Taylor - Tempus Publishing
ISBN 0 7524 31161 £12.99

Further details from our Rivers Secretary (who is a member of the RCHS).

THE GOOD OLD DAYS - BOATING IN THE 60s

Can it really be more than 40 years since I started boating? I must be getting old!

It all started when my father brought home a 17 foot cruiser (a Brensal Princess built in Highbridge, Somerset), having bought it from somewhere in Leicestershire and towed it behind the company Land Rover - so that's why he had a tow bar fitted!

Mother decided she wanted nothing to do with it. It was neglected and the bilges were full of wet sand that had vomited forth from rotten sacks (this was supposed to be the ballast). "You won't get me on that!" she exclaimed. The next day she got out the step ladders so that she could climb into the offending vessel and start cleaning it out. She (the boat, not my mum), was appropriately named "Shalom" - the Hebrew word for Peace, so I believe.

We decided to ditch the curious toilet system which consisted of a seat on a folding framework to which could be attached a plastic bag suitably equipped with a tie cord for sealing in the contents. There were so many spare bags I think they provided more ballast than the aforementioned sand!

We bought a Camping Gaz cooker to boil a kettle, found a suitable mooring at Kingfisher moorings on the River Avon near Pershore and started boating. The engine was a fairly thirsty Gale outboard motor. I remember it seemed to consume a tank full of petrol/oil mixture every time we ventured out for a short cruise. On our first excursion downstream we encountered a "bridge". We could safely pass through it, so my father thought. Now he was a very good engineer and businessman but he clearly had never seen a weir on the Lower Avon. Mother won the argument, and we did a quick detour into the adjacent lock cut, just before our voyage nearly ended in disaster!

We soon realised that if we were to take our boating seriously we needed a proper motor cruiser. So, within a few months the first boat had been sold and we acquired a magnificent 26 foot Moody Solent cruiser (named "Mirador"), complete with Wortham Blake inboard petrol engine, galley and a sea toilet. My lasting memory is of my father attempting to pump the toilet system dry to avoid frost damage in the winter. He was trying to pump the river dry!

We liked the boat so much we bought a larger (32 feet long) TSDY designed by Frederick Parker and built by the same company - A H Moody & Sons of Swanwick, Southampton. (Note for canal boaters: TSDY = twin screw diesel yacht). This vessel was called "Le Cygne" - the swan. She was luxurious and sea-going, so we went to sea; initially in convoy with other boats based at Beecham's boatyard in Tewkesbury. We made several trips down the Bristol Channel and into Bristol over the few years that we owned her, passing under the newly opened Severn Bridge and encountering petrol barges along the River Severn on the way. On our first foray on to tidal waters we were honoured to be allowed to lock into Avonmouth Docks - not normally open to pleasure craft. We also boarded the

around her. Luckily, we had an experienced barge skipper on board with us for peace of mind, instead of having to pay for a pilot. We lived on board in Tewkesbury for a few months whilst awaiting a new bungalow and witnessed the great fire at Healings Mill and the sight of Bill Shakespeare (the power boat man, not the Bard) testing his boat at 70 m.p.h. along the winding river, late at night.

At about the same time as the entire Beecham boatyard family were exterminated by a gun-crazed son (now deceased) we sold the 32 footer and bought a 42 foot TSDY from Moody's at Swanwick. It turned out that she was the first motor yacht ever to be fitted out by - you've guessed it - Beecham's at Tewkesbury!! During the 1960's they turned out a fleet of luxury wooden motor yachts and the occasional sailing vessel and we attended numerous launching ceremonies with the local parson blessing all who sailed in them. One of my earliest memories is of a large motor yacht complete with a funnel that had to be demounted to pass under the low King John's bridge on the Avon. The boatyard had an arrangement with the lock keeper to open the paddles early in the morning to lower the river level by a crucial few inches!

Over the years, our boats became better equipped for cruising but in the early days onboard fridges were unheard of. The best we could manage was an Oso-Kool cold box that depended on evaporation of water poured into its outer casing to attain its cooling effect. Fridges came later but it was still difficult to obtain fresh milk. Everyone had a milkman, so it was impossible to buy milk from a shop (there were no supermarkets then) and on one occasion we had to walk around the streets of Bristol to find a café/milk-bar who offered to fill our bottles from their cooled milk dispenser. The only alternative was to use UHT long-life milk or the newly invented Marvel dried milk, but they never tasted quite the same. Beer was another problem. Bottles were heavy and bulky, so boaters used to buy long-life beer in cans. It tasted funny but was all you could get.

Other memories of boating in the halcyon days? Well, not having to pay for a licence on the Lower Avon - they didn't have the legal powers to charge, but most boat owners did not begrudge the voluntary payment of a few pounds a year on this newly restored river. And not having to pay to use the river Severn (that was not law until the BW Act 1971). However, payment was required to use the locks and this entailed the lock-keeper passing down a can on the end of a stick into which one placed the half-a-crown lock fee.

The Severn was still a fairly busy commercial river, with Esso and Harker tanker traffic and the occasional line of dumb barges being towed between Worcester and Gloucester. The remains of the old movable railway bridge at Saxon's Lode just below Upton were still a hazard to navigation, as were the floating fuel barge and line of trot moorings in the centre of the river at Upton. Fuel was cheap - petrol less than 25p per gallon and diesel fuel about 6p per gallon (but still in "old money" at that time).

Happy days!

Stephen Peters



Whittington Bridge, Coventry Canal, 9/04
Will we be able to see what's coming through it next year?

THE BW VEG PLEDGE

Robin Evans has promised that all towpath vegetation will be cut once a year, or more often, and that offside trees will be curtailed.

This pledge was made in front of all who attended the BW Annual Meeting, along with the invitation to report directly to him any evidence that said promise was not being fulfilled.

Critics will ask why it has taken this long to recognise the problem, and why it only happened after Eugene Baston, Manager, Customer Relations, took the BW boat '*nb Waterscape.com*' along the Stratford Canal and witnessed it first hand. Eugene has since been collecting photographic evidence and NABO has given generously!

The question is, 'Will BW now believe us when we say things are wrong?'

Advertisement

ANGRY ANGLERS?

Thanks to the member who sent in a clipping from a newspaper of the 1st of August by one Bob Nudd, who writes for Angling Times:-

I'M SICK OF ARGY BARGES

I love fishing canals but always feel like a second class citizen.

Anglers are the only ones who pay for using the country's network of cuts - through day tickets or annual club fees.

But it's the people who utilise the canals free of charge who seem to think anglers should not be there.

Each year hundreds of anglers have their pole sections broken by mountain bike riders roaring along the towpaths, while canoeists paddle right through your swim and barges churn the waters into a muddy mess

Yet it's the cash British Waterways receives from angling that helps pay for the bankside erosion caused by boats.

It would be a lot better if the money was used to stock some poor stretches of canal.

Advertisement

WORRIED WOMAN of the WATERWAYS

Have you heard that Waterways have produced a **video** to help us to travel about the cut in the proper way. I haven't seen it yet, so naturally I am worried about what it will say.

Will it be a big yawn? Will it be hilarious?

Perhaps it will succeed in making an easy job look difficult.

Well if I have to pay to see it I will never know!

Vegetation can be a worry when there is too much of it in the wrong place. All along the towpath edge and so high that when cruising you cannot see which side of the canal the towpath is!

You can't see the canal edge or where you are to step should you need to get off your boat. I worry about the 'ankle snapping' risk of stepping into the unknown.

Another worrying example of **vegetation** in the wrong place is of trees growing out of the towpath wall. It is so short-sighted of BW to let the trees get established in the brickwork. The trees force the layers of bricks apart and, in time, destroy the structure of the canal. These trees should be cut back and poisoned.

We all have cause to worry about **vandalism**. Locks, bridges, waterpoints, the Falkirk Wheel! all structures can, and do, fall **victim** to mindless vandalism. How frustrating, time wasting and expensive it all is.

Of course, boaters wouldn't be involved in such things would they? Oh no?

Have you spotted the ever increasing incidence of what I call 'rectangular vandalism'? Burned rectangles on the grass, on picnic tables, on landing stages and other selected spots. I have seen rectangles branded into new mooring pontoons, made from some form of rot-proof plastic, the melted areas cause instant ruin!

I have never seen the perpetrators but assume it is done by barbecue freaks who just stand trays of coals in any spot and set light to them regardless of any damage it may cause.

That is mindless **vandalism** in my book. Can we literally stamp it out or will we worry about burning our boots?

Then there is the worry over our waterway heritage, which is **vanishing** or being **vandalised** to create so called 'improvements'.....

Hurrah for **volunteers**! Where would the waterways be today without the folk who are prepared to give so much of their time, energy and money to restoring and maintaining them.

Why should I worry about **volunteers**. The problem I see is that nobody, employed by the waterways authorities, wants a full time job clearing up

rubbish. It's great for people to give up their time to do 'clean up campaigns' but rubbish clearance is an ongoing task.

There was a three-year clean-up campaign on the BCN, that got extended to nearly four years. It was never intended to be a permanent job. Most of the operatives didn't want to be doing it anyway and didn't try to make it work. Just a few who cared about the state of the canals asked to be involved. When it came to an end rubbish collection ceased and (surprise surprise) the canals and banks filled up with rubbish and litter again.

I say again **hurrah for volunteers!** The BCNS do a great job, and many others elsewhere. BW seem to just concern themselves with the **visual** impact and clear rubbish from the surface so it looks good. It shouldn't always be left to **volunteers** to keep the navigation open.

Another job that is now done by **volunteers**, one that should be done by lengthsman or inspectors, is that of reporting problems and the breakdown of structures.

Please worry too.

If it don't work and you don't tell 'em, they wont know!

Nobody from the authorities comes along to work the locks, swing the bridges, get alongside at shallow moorings or try to navigate rivers by obscure or non existent signs. If they can't get a **van** there they don't go!

Do you think that you get **value** for money in your dealings with waterway's authorities, or from the services that they provide? Do you think of yourself as a **valued** customer, or do you somehow feel that **visitors** take priority? Costly information boards and instantly vandalised listening posts get installed while the fabric of the canals deteriorates. We know that cyclists and fishermen are well catered for but have you noticed that **voles** have more rights and consideration than us boaters?

I have heard that there is now a boat club for people who do **virtual** canal cruising. Is that fun I wonder? I hope it doesn't catch on. I know that all work and repairs on the waterways have to be entered into a computer, listed, prioritised and goodness knows what, before anything is actually done but the idea of **virtual** maintenance and repairs is truly worrying!

When the authorities run user groups or other consultations are our **views** really taken into account? They may listen but do they take any notice? It is important that boaters have a **voice** so please let 'them' and NABO know your **views**.

Man or mouse? Come on squeak up.

Yours worried as ever ..

Dot

The Great Gate Debate

Those who read Waterways World or keep abreast of the internet news groups will no doubt have heard of Adrian Stott's proposals that BW abandon its policy of us closing all lock gates when leaving a lock, and instead recommending leaving the exit gates open, as one does on many rivers. Adrian is even asking NABO to adopt the policy officially.

Some would like to take it a stage further and have paddles left open too, claiming that it would then be up to the next boat's crew to ensure the paddles were down before using the lock, rather than one crew putting them down only for the next crew having to check them.

One can do endless time and motion studies, with different lock configurations, wide and narrow, tail bridge or no, etc. etc. to argue for and against. Then there are other factors. Would open gates save that annoying inch of level difference caused by using the previous lock? Would having to walk to the other end of a lock set against you make you more likely to look for a boat coming the other way?

What about water wastage? Does closing an exit gate make a good enough seal to reduce leakage at the other end? Does leaving gates open increase the risk of malicious tampering or its effects?

How much work is needed to change a culture and the signage that goes with it?

When you have weighed all this up, visit www.nabo.org.uk/gates.html and cast your vote, Yes or No.

If the response is definite then we will make it NABO policy and put it to BW. If the response is divided then we could suggest trialling it on the Llangollen where water wastage is no problem.

NABO CRUISE - River Severn - Sharpness to Bristol

So far sixteen members are on the list for further details.

Points to remember:-

- Being on the list only means you will receive further details, you are not committed.
- There may be a limit to the number of boats that can wait for the tide in Portishead Marina.
- Do contact your insurers. If they insist on your boat having a pilot, point out that the number of pilots may be limited. (Michael Stimpson is prepared to accept one pilot for the convoy, but normally makes a £30 surcharge for this passage. For NABO he is prepared to halve this.)

Contact the General Secretary, details on the back of this magazine.

NOTICES

POST FOR NABO NEWS

For issue 7/04 please send contributions well in advance to 48 Old Lane, Bramhope, Leeds LS16 9AZ

E-mail much better if possible-
news.editor@nabo.org.uk



DID YOU KNOW?

There are still members who think the subscription is £10!
It has been

£15

for nearly two years now!

PLEASE CHECK YOUR STANDING ORDERS

NABO EMAIL BULLETIN

This has been victim to a computer 'worm' of late, but we hope the new 'disposable password' system will prevent any further unauthorised messages getting into the system.

That said, remember you can remove yourself from the list using the form on the members-only website page. Your webmaster has been narrowband of late and may not have cleared all changed addresses from the list. He asks folks to use this facility to do it themselves if possible.

PASSWORDS

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

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

The User ID for the members section is the word 'member'.

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

**Text your waterway reports to: 07961 001814
07989 441674
07930 419 981**



RIVERS



Assisted Passage Through Blakes Lock to be curtailed

The Environment Agency has announced that due to the withdrawal of funding from British Waterways (whose contribution has hitherto enabled Blakes Lock on the River Kennet at Reading to be manned full time from April to October) the assisted passage through this lock will not always be available with effect from 1 September 2004.

The short section of the River Kennet between the Thames and the Kennet & Avon Canal is under the jurisdiction of the EA. BW's responsibility starts just downstream of High Bridge in Reading town centre but they have helped to fund the manning of Blakes Lock for a number of years.

When the lock is un-manned boaters will be able to obtain BW windlasses, keys and pump-out cards from the nearby "Fisherman's Cottage" public house.

TOWER BRIDGE

The Rivers Secretary continues to receive copies of Port of London Notices to Mariners covering the tidal Thames between Teddington and the estuary.

Information includes times of Thames Barrier closures and navigation warnings such as bridge repairs, fireworks displays, etc.

A recent notice covers the operation of Tower Bridge. This edifice was built in 1894 and is owned and managed by the Corporation of London. It has twin lifting bascules which can be raised to permit passage of tall vessels at no charge, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Any vessel having a mast or superstructure of 30ft (9.1m) must book 24 hours in advance in writing or by fax (via an Agent in most cases). If tugs are involved they will make their own arrangements for passage after a berthing operation. Once booked, a numbered Bridge Lift order is allocated and listed in the bridge lift programme. The bookings list is circulated by fax or e-mail to the PLA, news and media and other interested parties. There is also a telephone information line 020 7940 3984 and a website www.towerbridge.org.uk

The bridge bascules are lifted to the required nominal height only to reduce lifting and lowering times. The control room is manned 30 minutes before a lift and monitors VHF channel 14. Communication is essential because of the need to co-ordinate the movement of road traffic and only 5 minutes leeway on a booked transit time is permitted during busy road traffic time.

NARROWBOATS ON THE THAMES

Motor Boat Monthly reports that members of the Association of Thames Yacht Clubs have complained that narrowboats are reluctant to 'raft' up to save space on moorings and to use adequate fenders in locks to protect GRP vessels.

When asked for brief comments, your chairman stressed that NABO is not exclusively for narrowboats. He understood the concerns and would pass them on, but pointed out that breasting up is certainly not familiar practice on the canals and it causes problems with privacy, light and access to shore for narrowboats.

On fendering he suggested that a cruiser fendered to protect itself from the lockside should have no problems with a straight-sided steel hull.

PORT OF LONDON UPDATE

Code of Practice for Safe Mooring –

This had now been published. Copies are available.

Inland Waterways Freight Standards

Work is continuing on the development of new competency standards for the new Boatmaster's Licence and also new technical standards for commercial vessels on inland waterways. MCA hope to have them in place by the end of 3/2005.

Port Incidents –

Two incidents reported concerned RIBs, both being used as safety boats, both driven by RYA instructors, both ignored rules of the river – both are subject to further investigation.

London Coastguard

The number of involvements for the first two years of service was just under seven hundred per year.

The RNLI have purchased Waterloo Police Pier and the Tower Lifeboat Station and will move there when accommodation is ready.

Works

Westminster Pier will be closed from 1/10/2004 through to spring of 2005.

Thames Barrier Notice Boards being changed, will have LED display.

Greenwich Pier – There are plans for residential and retail units and the whole area will be opened up to give a view from the river up to the college.

Corporation of London are going to fit chains on to London, Tower, Southwark and Blackfriars Road Bridge – there will be arch closures for this.

VHF Radio

Although no requirement for vessels under 20m. to carry radios, lots do but they need to use them in order to be aware of river conditions and traffic. Channels 12/68/14 should be listened to for navigation broadcasts.

Policing the Lower Thames

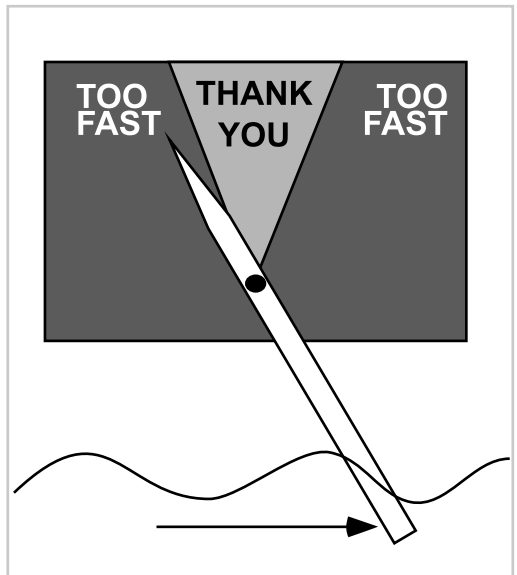
Surrey took over the policing responsibility from the Metropolitan Police in April 2000. The Met had an establishment of sixteen officers, three boats and a riverside police station. Surrey Constabulary have just appointed one policeman, dedicated to the Thames from Staines to Teddington,

This single policeman was promised equipment such as a boat etc. Now they have decided he can make do with a mountain bike! If it wasn't so serious it would be funny. Farce and tragedy are the words that come to mind.



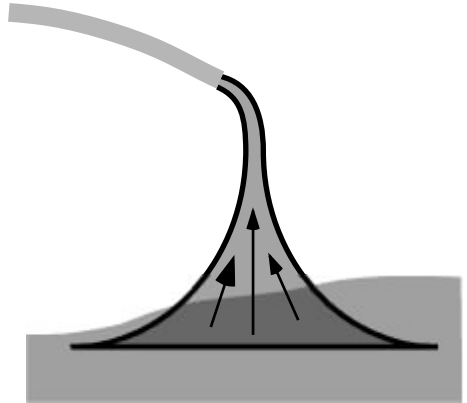
Yes, I'm a spelling mistake. Give me an 'f' and I would be Chair of silly ideas, give me 'ell' (or two) and I would be a propeller-head. Best take me as I am.

I got two ideas from what your chairman was saying about slowing DOWN in the last mag. We all know what tosses you about when a tosser goes past too fast - its the water trying to dash round his boat to fill in behind it as it speeds along. So, as Lord Kelvin said, 'to measure is to know' and (Mr Snow, eat your heart out) I've invented a Swingometer. Take a board, hang it vertical on the side of your boat and pivot a bit of wood so the end is in the water. As a boat passes, the water pushes the bottom one way or the other and you can make the



top into a pointer that points to whatever expletive you have painted on the board.

If that doesn't shame them, then sterner measures are needed. Them who observe will know that when water moves it's level goes down or so Bernoulli said. Well, he is right. As a boat passes the level goes down, then comes back up. If it comes up too fast you get breaking wash, specially when there are beaches to concentrate the waves. Now, my idea is to concentrate the wave using a wide funnel upside down on the water. As the level comes up it surges into the funnel and into a nozzle aimed at the steerer on the stern of the offending vessel.



T.M.P.

More Idiocy

Why waste the sunshine in the shade of the cabin hatch when you can stand on top and steer with your foot?





LAVENDER BLUES?



We decided we would spare you the original title of this item in large letters: ***'Do You Want Splashback?'***. However NABO News covers all aspects of life afloat, from top to bottom, and we make no apologies for this being nearest the latter.

There are many boaters that choose the portable toilet over pump-out. Maybe they don't want to store sewage on their boat for any longer than necessary, or maybe they don't wish to have to rely upon anyone else, paid or otherwise, to deal with their foul water. Whatever the reason, every two or three days they have to find somewhere they can take a full container and return with it empty, with minimum hassle, minimum awareness of its contents and certainly no contact with said contents.

Unfortunately this is not always possible. I am sure it would have been no problem to the Romans at the turn of the first millennium, but it does seem to defeat the navigation authority designers at the turn of the third millennium. You would think they, of all people, should have mastered the behaviour of aqueous fluids by now!

I remember waiting outside the then brand new toilet disposal block at Kings Marina, Newark, while the man before me made numerous forays for paper towels to clear up the mess inside. When it was my turn I saw why. There was a wide pan with water up to four inches below the rim, into which it was impossible to pour anything without splashing. The surrounding walls bore witness to this by being splattered with – well, mainly – blue.

Firstly, there is no need for a large aperture, this just gives a big hole for it to come back out of, secondly any retained water should be at least two feet below the rim. Secondly, there should also be no surfaces at more than 45 degrees to the trajectory of the effluent, so it has no chance to bounce back. I say the latter because one can get splashing back even with a three foot deep manhole if it is flat bottomed.

What seems ideal is like what I found once, I think on the Wey, a tube sloping down into the ground at about 60 degrees with a hinged lid on the end. It may have been a little narrow to pour into from a bucket, but that could easily be cured by flattening the end a bit. It was ideal for toilets with an outlet tube. If there was a trap it was well down, and because of the angle, any splashing up would have been caught within the tube. It seemed so simple that I really don't know why so much is spent on elaborate ceramic or stainless steel creations. In fact there was so little to it that it didn't even need flushing, the water used to rinse the toilet tank would suffice.

The other advantage was that there would be little to vandalise. This being the reason quoted as why one had to travel all of 58 lock/miles between Castlefield

Junction and Marple through the Manchester 'bad lands' before being able to empty a toilet. I am told there are now facilities again at the top of the Ashton locks but how long will they last? Even if out in the open, a simple chunky steel or cast iron tube with a stout lid would attract little attention, and probably less if the little darlings knew what it was for!

What do you readers think, and should NABO be awarding ratings for disposal points around the system? Suggestions for what units we should use to rate them also welcome!

Stuart Sampson

SEA CADETS TO MERGE

The Sea Cadet Corps is Britain's oldest voluntary maritime-based youth charity, under the joint control of the Sea Cadet Association and Royal Navy. It has an operational structure throughout the UK with more than 14,000 cadets trained by volunteers at 400 units. Even land-locked areas such as the Midlands are covered by the Training Ship (T.S.) units.

By the end of 2004 the Sea Cadets will have merged with the Marine Society to form a new combined charity to be known as The Marine Society and Sea Cadets. This will create an organisation which will provide training opportunities and help to shape young people for the maritime services.

The Marine Society has been supporting seafarers since 1756 when a group of London merchants decided to encourage poor men and boys of good character to enlist in the Royal navy at the start of the Seven Years War. The Society was subsequently incorporated by Act of Parliament in 1772

Further details can be found on websites www.sea-cadets.org ,www.royal-navy.mod.uk and www.marine-society.org

Stephen Peters

Advertisement

FLY ON THE WALL



at Council

The meeting season has begun again and I flew into a meeting that had the added excitement of a visit by Eugene Baston, BW's Customer Services manager - and he boats!

Before he came, Council had heard about BW's AGM from your Chairman and Secretary, both of whom had attended AND managed to make a point or two about customer satisfaction with BW which BW seems to think is OK! Their report back gave Council some items to raise with Eugene.

The first of these points was lock gates. Can they be left open on leaving? Some waterways have this policy and others ask for locks to be left empty. The southern Grand Union traditionally left exit gates open. It's 50/50 on joy or groan! And how about leaving a paddle up? It could slow down the 'change a lock in your face' boys.

Licence evasion had a good airing. BW blamed the increase on the computer fiasco last year and assured Council that they were working on cases but that it takes about 18 months to process a case, especially if the family home is involved. Sadly they can't put 'BW Aware' stickers on the water side of boats to let you know this as you pass.

Council encouraged BW to publish statistics on licences and to publicise their enforcement policy in the waterways press. It was also suggested that the BW magazine 'Waterfront' should go to all licence holders and not just the long term ones as now. It also seems that only continuous cruisers get the stoppage info.

Have you completed a BW survey lately? Apparently there are three at the moment. Two are paper questionnaires for towpath users and hire boats, Private boaters have a telephone one...must reduce response a bit?

Vandalism raised its ugly head especially in the light of your experiences. Eugene felt there was little more BW could do and advised that boaters needed to be responsible for the security of their own boats. Will they be more responsible for the security of their 'secure moorings'?

Council felt boaters' complaints were often ignored so it was doubly annoying to find that comments by BW managers after their boat trips appeared to bear fruit. It was suggested that BW Directors attend user group meetings to find out what is really going on!

A reminder to you all that the complaints procedure can be used for such things as vegetation! All towpath trees and bushes should get an annual trim and now off-side trees will also be dealt with.

Eugene was asked about the rumour that there could be restrictions on the hours the Montgomery Canal was open.

Apparently there had been complaints that boats were not environmentally friendly. BW have a dual powered boat, diesel and electric, and think this may be a way forward. Oh dear?!

BIG reminder for you all....the AGM is on 13th November at Lapworth Village Hall.

And don't forget, the twenty of you are still paying the old amount for your annual subscription to update your standing order! It's £15!

See you at the AGM.

Byeeeeee.



LETTERS



So who is profiteering?

We have just returned from 3 months cruising, from the north west to the Thames and back, and deisel prices ranged from 27p. to 48p. per litre, Nottingham and Windsor the highest, Egham and Compton the lowest, the average being about 35p. The last time that forecourt petrol prices reached the current level canal fuel averaged around 31p per litre.

Then there is Calor gas, 13 kg., propane, from £14.95 to £11.00. the best being Ted's Boat Yard at Market Drayton.

Is it just the Oil Companies that are announcing higher profits or are many others climbing on the 'soak the boater' bandwagon ?

Would it be possible to put together a list of 'reasonable priced fuel suppliers'?

Terri & Lee,
N.B. Lady Kate.

Boaters Video

Thank you for your review of the Boater's Handbook video and DVD in the last issue of Nabo News. Your help in publicising its existence is very much appreciated since I hope your members and others will request the film and learn from it while enjoying an armchair trip along some of our waterways.

I did want to comment on your view that "unfortunately the producers sought no input from inland boating groups" since this isn't true! At the very early stages of production planning I enlisted the help and support of the Association of Pleasure Craft Operators, The RYA and three individual hire boat operators to advise on the film's content and production values. These people were involved in the complete development of the film's script and even attended some of the filming days.

Then the really hard work began - the editing! It's never an easy process,

deciding what should and should not go in to the final 'cut', and we deliberately made it even harder by holding viewings of the 'rough cut' for various user group representatives and individuals from the waterways. Imagine trying to combine everyone's comments, including finding middle ground where opinions were well and truly divided!

But we got there and I wouldn't have done it any other way. Everyone has their own opinion on what makes an effective safety film, and I think that by including these views we've got the film as close as it could be to being entertaining, informative and interesting in equal measure. Let's face it, we may as well make best use of the wide range of expertise out there, eh?

Eugene Baston, Producer &
Customer Relations Manager, BW

The remark regarding the lack of consultations with boating groups originated from views expressed at a meeting of the National Inland Navigation Forum where no delegate present recollected their organisation being involved. Seeing Eugene's list perhaps it should have read that no non-commercial boating user groups were involved. Ed.

Data Protection.

In your haste to publish the 'Stop Press' letter from Mr Peter James about data protection it is regrettable that you did not ask for a response from BW so that your readers could have had a balanced picture at that time.

He first made a 'data subject access request' to BW on 12 December 2001 that was answered on 19 December 2001. Since then there has been a substantial exchange of letters. Some letters have been written as further data subject access requests, some were unclear as to their status. These letters have been

addressed both to BW and a local firm of solicitors in Gloucester that acted for BW in the prosecutions. Sometimes Mr James would write to several persons within BW on the same day.

Mr James has been advised on many occasions that he has been sent all the personal data to which he is entitled under the Data Protection Act. Any material that is legally privileged is exempt from disclosure under paragraph 10, schedule 7 of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Some further points your readers might like to bear in mind:

The letter from the Information Commissioner's office that Mr James quotes says "From the information provided it appears...". I do not know what information Mr James did give to the ICO, nor what he failed to give, but BW has now given the full picture to the ICO.

There is no system called "Customer Resource Management" used by BW. BW does have ambitions to have a "customer relationship" module within its new computer system, but this is on hold at the moment pending availability of funding. Contrary to the sinister overtones implied by Mr James, such a module is aimed at improving customer service by having a common database of customer communications to avoid the problem of confusion where a customer has simultaneous dealings with multiple offices or departments of BW.

The £10 fee that is payable in respect of a data subject access request is that specified under the Data Protection Act 1998 and is not a fee specified by BW.

There is a history of dispute between BW and Mr James and it is always regrettable when there is a breakdown in the relationship between BW and any of

its customers. BW must however act in the interest of its customers as a whole and this occasionally requires the taking of court action. Mr James's letter published in your last edition needs to be read in the context of that long (and ongoing) dispute - a context that he failed to give.

I reiterate that:

- BW has provided to Mr James the information to which he is entitled under the Data Protection Act 1998.
- BW does, and will continue to, comply with the spirit and letter of data protection law.

Nigel I Johnson
Legal Director

Peter James replies

Despite BW's previous protestations to have provided all the data to which I was entitled, since the Information Commissioners Assessment they have now provided personal data on the SAP system (the non-customer resource management system!) as well as a false prosecution report, still uncorrected two years on.

I am delighted to be able to give the context on other issues that Nigel desires:-

Bank Erosion.

The banks of the river Severn near Worcester are eroding with huge chunks of riverbank (eg 30m by 5m by 3m) collapsing into the river. The dearth of watermargin vegetation is so severe that the Environment Agency cannot undertake biological quality tests. The river banks are beyond their natural ability to repair themselves to regrow bank-binding vegetation at current levels of breaking washes from a small minority of speeding boats. BW have refused for four years to even inspect the erosion, and refused to implement their duty of care to riparian owners,

boat owners and other river users. This makes a mockery of BW supposed commitments to biodiversity and sustainable development.

Licences on Rivers.

It is clear in Part 2 of the 1971 Waterways Act, that for pleasure boats on specified rivers, BW only has jurisdiction over the navigable channel, which for the Severn is about 20% of the width. This means, for example, that boat owners who moor up over winter need not pay a licence, nor for boats that do not use the navigable channel, eg canoes, rowers and others. BW's duty as statutory authority would seem to require BW to publish the laws and byelaws on the internet to inform the public and BW customers.

BW Misinformation.

Far from the courts having found me in breach of "byelaws", the Judge noted with "some concern" the fact that BW did not "furnish the magistrates court with the law" ie the above Act, which never had it. Neither in High Court nor since has BW advanced any legal argument to rebut the interpretation above. For misinformation of this nature to be given by BW, a public statutory body, appears to reveal gross incompetence and/or malicious intent. This is precisely why a fully independent regulator is needed. Further information on these issues will be published on internet newsgroup uk.rec.waterways and I would be glad to expand on them and hear of others experiences of BW on peterjames123@yahoo.co.uk

Editor's Note- Both letters have been edited slightly to reduce personal acrimony. I was expecting a revised version from BW and thus a revised reply, but these were not forthcoming.

No more on this issue will be included in this magazine.

NABO News is published by
National Association of Boat Owners
FREEPOST (BM8367),
Birmingham B31 2BR

Whilst every care is taken to ensure that the contents of this newsletter are factually correct, we accept no liability for any direct or consequential loss arising from any action taken by anyone as a result of reading anything contained in this publication. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association. The products and services advertised in this publication are not necessarily endorsed by the Association.