



**THE MAGAZINE OF THE**



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

**ISSUE 7-04 - DECEMBER 2004**

**EA Order / AGM / 12 days of Xmas**

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## 2005 CALENDAR

<b>Council meeting</b>	<b>Copy date</b>
Jan 22nd	Jan 29th
Mar 5th	Mar 12th
Apr 23rd	Apr 30th
June 4th	June 11th
July 16th	July 23rd
Sept 17th	Sept 24th
<b>Nov 19th A.G.M.</b>	
Nov 26th	Dec 3th



# CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

First of all, seasonal greetings and thanks for all the support over the last year. When you read this you probably won't be in a mood for serious thinking, so I ask you to keep this magazine separate from the wrapping paper rubbish and look at it again when you can focus!

## The AGM

It was good to see the faithful few give up a rather pleasant day to come to Lapworth on the 13th of November for the 13th NABO AGM. I cannot blame anyone for wanting to be boating instead, but at least nobody apologised for superstitious reasons! It would have been nice to see more people, but as the AGM is your opportunity to tackle Council face to face about where NABO is going, then... can we take your absence as a vote of confidence?

Anyway, Council is little changed. We welcome Peter Foster back now he is no longer anchored by the mayoral chains of Newark, and Tony Haynes has joined with a view to tackling the issue of antisocial behaviour on the waterways. The other formalities proceeded with little contention and questions from the floor began before lunch, complete with a brief update by Trevor Rogers on the BSS progress which he has achieved very much behind the scenes on our behalf.

Some members came afterwards in person to say they had enjoyed the

meeting – AGMs aren't held to be enjoyed, are they? There was a suggestion that we find a guest 'speaker' for next year, who would you like to hear?

Don't forget, you can read the minutes on the members-only part of the website.

## Representation

Three days later I was at BW's National User Group meeting where NABO's invitation to the National Consultative Council Inauguration Committee was made public.

I am glad to see that NABO is to be included in spite of the membership figures being bandied about by other organisations. It shows that people in power are not impressed by sheer numbers and recognise that, as representation is our 'core activity', we have just as important a role to play. If they were to count only those members of other organisations who joined primarily to be represented, I am sure the numbers game would be played to different rules.

What matters to the navigation authorities is that NABO's 'catchment' for members is their whole customer base for individual craft registrations/licences and we devote the lion's share of our efforts towards improving communication between those customers and the authorities, and vice versa.

That said, I am sure many of you will be wondering why yet another body is needed to advise BW, and whether BW will take any notice. As an aside, I might also ask why the EA escapes.

NABO members have been calling for an independent regulator for some time, but there is no guarantee the regulator will find in their favour. What I feel they really want is a body that will not only listen to them, but also have enough clout to affect BW's policies directly. We already have IWAAC, which has statutory powers over certain BW activities, but is BW toeing its line? Not always I hear. So what chance has a conglomerate of user groups? These are the doubts we hope Professor Jowell will take into consideration when we get together to set it up.

Its first task is already set, to choose three members from its ranks to be on the Ombudsman Committee – which in turn has a job to do – appoint a new Ombudsman. So there is a lot to be done, and got right.

### Who is unrepentant?

Answer – whoever wrote the column in *Canal & Riverboat* that brought Robin Evans great joy when we last met, because someone apart from him was being castigated in the waterways press! The victim was me.

I won't go into the issues, that is old hat now, or should I say 'Aquarius (=water) Under the Bridge'? However I will give said writer his due (I assume it was a him): he did mention that I was prepared to stick my neck out in the public domain and speak for boaters' interests. It is a shame he himself dodges behind the anonymity of not one, but a choice of two, magazine columns rather than allow his views to be attributed personally.

**For now, may I wish you Merry Christmas and may you have a 'good road' for 2005**

Stuart

## The Twelve Days of Christmas

25th December

*My dearest darling*

*What an unusual present, a Christmas tree with real candles, and beautifully dressed too! It arrived adorned with a multi-coloured bow and gift tag bearing your name. It was a bit tricky trying to get something five foot long inside, and I kept banging into the sides of the boat, but what an enchanting gift! Bless you and thank you.*

*Your deeply loving Sarah*



## **PLEASE HELP US SORT THE POSTINGS**

We have been gauging reaction to the scheme after six months of use and are pleased to hear that BW is not only finding the day-to-day reporting valuable, but is also using the data for preparing maintenance funding bids. NABO is also collecting reports to make a case for better policing of the waterways, and we need to ensure the BW Veg Pledge is being kept.

All this would be much easier if we could sort the postings into categories and you could help us by starting your 'new discussion' title with one of these words. The rest of it is up to you:-

**CUT CRIME** - for any report regarding threatening or antisocial behaviour

**SAFETY** - for any threat to human (or pet) well-being other than the above

**POLLUTION** - Oil, fly tipping etc.

**VEG** - includes any plant matter that causes or could cause a problem

**DREDGING** - anything problematic below the water

**LEVEL** - for lack or excess of water in the navigation

**LOCK** - for any problem regarding operation of a lock

**WATERWAY** - anything else between the banks of the waterway

**TOWPATH** - anything else concerning the land on the towpath side

**OFFSIDE** - anything else concerning the land on the opposite side

For instance:-

*'VEG - saplings growing out of lock approach walls'*

or:-

*'SAFETY - Pothole hidden by grass'*

Did you know? Robin Evans even sang the praises of the Waterway Reports at the BW Annual Meeting. Keep feeding it, it is a hungry beast, and don't forget you can text reports in on **07930 419 981**

# EA to become a law unto itself?

## NABO objects

### Story so far

When the National Rivers Authority, now assimilated into the EA, took over navigation responsibilities on various rivers from individual bodies like the Thames Conservancy, it inherited a package of rules, bylaws and charging regimes with each river. These were, of course, incompatible and so the EA is now trying to replace them all with a single package as an Order under the Transport and Works Act (Inland Waterways). We have no problem with this aim.

### The legal process

Before it can be done, a final draft has to be 'served' on interested parties, including NABO, inviting objections and comments. Drafts have been flying round for some time and you should have seen mention of it, especially by Adrian Stott. The 25th of November was the closing date for objections to be lodged with the Secretary of State and if, within four weeks, objections are not resolved, or seen to be in the process of being resolved, then the Order becomes the subject of a public enquiry. It has been speculated that EA would not be in a position to afford an enquiry and opponents could revel in seeing it dropped.

### The Order

The main purpose of the Order is to give EA powers to regulate vessels on all its rivers in terms of the registration process, conditions such as construction standards, compulsory insurance etc. and, of course, fees. It is written in legal terms that appear quite draconian even to the uninitiated, and they would be right.

It gives wide-reaching powers that EA could exercise without any comeback and makes any breach of rules set under the Order a criminal offence. The IWA claim that EA, as a non-elected body, should not have these powers and the correct procedure is to make the rules into bylaws which would need individual ministerial approval. However, because there are aspects of the Order that could be beneficial to boaters, we understand the IWA was not going to use this objection to stop the Order itself but to wait and challenge it in cases of misuse.

However the situation has changed –

### A Memorandum of Understanding? (MoU)

Alongside the Order, EA was drafting a document laying out how it would limit its use of the powers, which, if agreed with boating groups and observed, would make the overall effect of the Order much more acceptable. However this 'MoU' was not presented with the Order, nor was agreement reached on it before the closing date, so NABO, along with most other boating interest groups, lodged a general objection, along with some specific objections to various clauses.

### Specifics

- The Order draft lays out the **geographical boundaries** of the waters upon which EA would require vessels to be registered with it. Significantly these included '*adjacent waters*' whose definition could be taken to include the

River Wey, the Oxford Canal, the Northampton Arm, plus those parts of the River Kennet and Anglian waters at present under the jurisdiction of other authorities. However this is easily solved with a wording change.

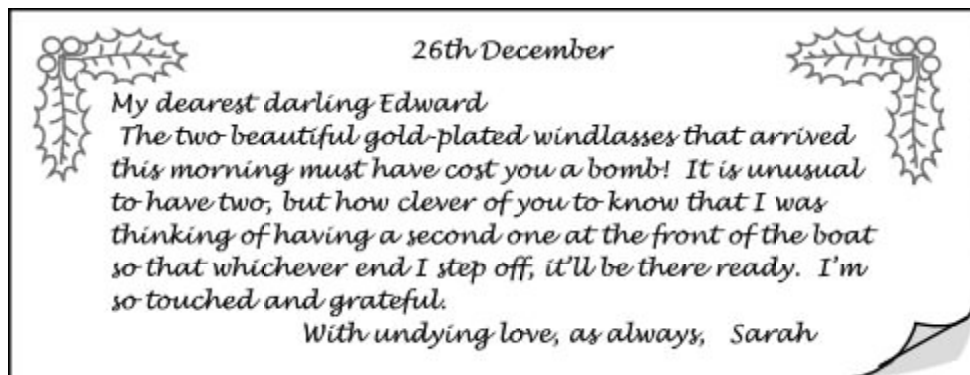
More deliberately, '*adjacent waters*' also would include marinas and backwaters, particularly off the Thames, where some boats don't move at all and sea-going boats rest up for the winter, at present without having to be registered. Although there are clauses built into the Order to allow exemption, these are left to the discretion of the EA with no statutory mechanism for appeal or consultation. NABO is objecting to this.

- **Craft Construction Standards** are as the EA sees fit. No mention of the BSS, for which EA is a co-sponsor. Under the Order you could be required to surround your boat with inflatable Santas as a condition of registration and hauled up before the magistrates if you didn't. Again we are critical of this, and in particular the cumbersome appeals process.
- NABO is in favour of the compulsory **third party insurance** clause, but would like to see this requirement extended to all vessels, not just powered ones. A rowing eight at full speed could inflict terminal damage on a GRP cruiser in a collision and, in any case, the 'master' of any vessel can be responsible for an accident which causes damage or injury to others.
- The Order gives the EA **powers to board vessels** which exceed those of BW.
- Although the Order gives the EA powers it needs to harmonise its **charging scheme** with other authorities, it puts no obligation on EA to do so, which was something it was told to do as a condition of retaining its navigation function when this was challenged following EA's 5-year DEFRA review.

The announcement of a 5.5% increase in fees for 2005, without consulting national user groups before it was imposed, highlights the deficiency of the Order to oblige the EA to attend to its consultation mechanisms.

## Conclusion

Until EA can put its house in order regarding consultation and complaints procedures, as BW is making great efforts to do, NABO, along with other groups, cannot trust it with the powers this Order will give it.



## PROPANE DISCOUNT SCHEME

The recent acrobatics of the world crude oil price have affected propane prices.

Flogas, the supplier to the Barge Association's national propane buying scheme, has now confirmed the latest prices. They are:

19kg - GBP 13.31      11kg - GBP 8.33

As ever, these prices are about a 40% discount to the normal retail prices. They include delivery (exchange), but the minimum order to any location is two bottles.

The scheme is open to NABO and RBOA members. If you want to join it, please contact me for details.

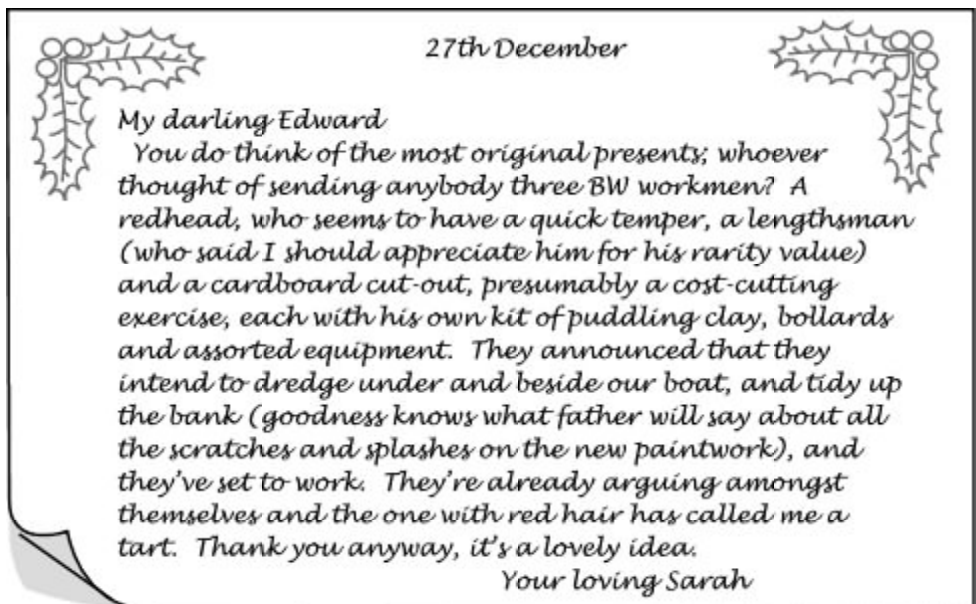
Adrian Stott,      dba@sdfg.co.uk      Tel. 07956-299966

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## CRUISE 2005 UPDATE

So far, twentyfour intrepid members have expressed an interest in cruising from Sharpness to Bristol next year. The first mailing has been sent out, and to date, eleven of them have signed up. Videos of the voyage and other preparatory documents will be sent out in the new year, so if anyone else is interested, you need to let Carole, general secretary, know a.s.a.p.

P.S. Would the owner of *nb Hampshire*, who expressed interest when he met Carole at Harecastle Tunnel, please make contact, as she doesn't know his name and can't therefore send any details!





# RALLIES RALLIES RALLIES RALLIES RALLIES

If that title has made you read on, chances are you visit the occasional rally during your boating. If so can you help me?

Council members attend as many as possible on behalf of NABO but there's not many of us and there are many more rallies and many more of you. It would be wonderful if you could do a bit of NABO publicity while you're at a rally. If you intended booking in for a particular rally, NABO would be prepared to pay your rally entrance in exchange for leafleting other boats and distributing application forms to anyone interested.

Will you help your Organisation? Do contact me where and when and we'll get the papers to you.

Council members will be at the National, Saul and Crick.

I await your offers for other rallies!

Phone or text me on 07703 567764 or email to;

[aileen.butler@btpenworld.com](mailto:aileen.butler@btpenworld.com)

28th December

Dearest Edward

What a surprise - four BW supervisors arrived this morning: I didn't know there were as many as four. I sent them outside to help the workmen, but they've insisted on being given coffee and biscuits first. They are talking so loudly that they make telephoning impossible, and it's difficult to get past them in this narrow boat. Anyway, I'm very grateful - of course I am.

Love from Sarah

# VACANCY - BSS Management Committee

The User Group post on this committee is vacant and NABO has been invited to nominate a candidate to compete for it against those from other boating user groups. Council must choose our candidate so we must have your applications by **Jan 20th 2005**.

The form from the person Council selects then has to be sent on, by the 31st, so Lady Knollys, Chairman of IWAAC, can choose from the candidates nominated by the user groups.

The post will be for two years and involve a maximum of six afternoon meetings per year in London or Watford. As we understand it, the role is mainly to report back to the user groups. We don't know how much one is able to contribute to decisions the committee makes.

Please apply to the Chairman for a copy of the form.

29th December

*Dearest Edward*

*I've just found five various boxes left outside the boat. A really lovely present, or at least two of them are, for I'm not sure what to do with the roof box, which mother has already tripped over and which is so high that we can't get under bridges, the tool box, or the gas box. Nevertheless, they are far lovelier than those BW workmen and supervisors, who are making so much noise that we cannot sleep at night. But I love the jewellery box and it looks increasingly as if I'll have a use for the First Aid Box, now that the needles have started dropping off the Christmas tree.*

*Love Sarah*

*Advertisement*

# CUT CRIME - NABO POLICY ADDITION

Tony Haynes, our new Council member, has promised us that he will take a special interest in what he would like to call 'CUT CRIME'.

His first action has been to draft the following to add to NABO's policy document, and we invite comments:-

## **18. Crime and Vandalism**

NABO recognises a nationwide increase in incidences of crime and vandalism on the waterways, mostly carried out by gangs of young teenagers. NABO also recognises that such criminals nearly always go scot free due to inadequate response from the police and navigational authorities. It is also noted that some boaters who are selling their boats have indicated that such intimidation has influenced their decision to give up boating.

Boaters are vulnerable to such crimes because of the remoteness of some locations, and because tow-paths and lock-sides are seldom patrolled. The laws of this land are intended to protect citizens from such incidences. This includes boaters going about their lawful pursuits on the waterways.

NABO is dedicated to making the authorities aware of the extent of these problems. NABO will encourage the reporting of all such incidences, however and wherever they take place. NABO will also explore and promote ways of reducing all crime and vandalism on the waterways.

*Advertisement*

# DO WANT RED DIESEL AFTER 2006? DO YOU WANT BW TO GET MORE GRANT NEXT YEAR?

Of course you do, but it's out of your hands. Or is it?

You can always lobby your MP, but how?

Do you even know who your MP is?

No problem with the website: [www.faxyourmp.com](http://www.faxyourmp.com) as its first page shows:-

## FaxYourMP.com - Fax Your MP For Free

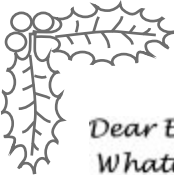
Type Your UK Postcode:

Go

If you don't know your Postcode you can try [The Royal Mail Postcode Finder](#)

NEW! How good is your MP at replying to faxes? Up to date MP performance data **now available**

- 1 Type in your full UK postcode, then click "Go"
- 2 Write the letter you want to be faxed to your MP
- 3 Click the link in the email we'll send you
- 4 That's it! You have faxed your MP



30th December



Dear Edward

Whatever I expected to find when I went outside the boat this morning, it certainly wasn't six lengths of rope! We've already got plenty, and father has broken his ankle falling over them. We have no more room, and the bank is already ruined. And one of the supervisors has started snooping on me at 7a.m. this morning, leering at me over his spectacles while I was still in bed. I know you mean well, but - let's call a halt, shall we?

Love Sarah

## WATER TRANSFER BY CANAL - NOTHING NEW

Nowadays we hear a lot about plans for transferring water from one part of the country to another, utilising inland waterways as conduits. Traditionally, canal companies always sold water as part of their business, particularly to industry that was located alongside the waterways. British Waterways set up a public private partnership in 2002 - Watergrid Limited - specifically to move water supplies and to sell treated water. Now BW currently earns just under £4m per annum from water sales.

In its Plan for the Future 2004 - 2008 BW indicates that it envisages considerable growth in this sector of its business. Watergrid is a partnership including Anglian Water and Bristol Water Holdings and the intention is to offer water supplies and waste water disposal facilities to customers near BW waterways. BW had hoped that the Water Act 2003 would have introduced common carriage of water using the existing water companies' network and it would thus have been able to sell water almost anywhere, similar to other utility companies.

NABO is ever watchful for likely detrimental consequences of mass transfer of water via canals but members may not know that extensive schemes already exist. For instance, the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal is

used to transfer water from the river Severn via large pumps at Gloucester, and from the river Cam feeder arm, to serve massive water treatment works located at Purton. These works supply Bristol with its drinking water. We were recently consulted over plans to construct impounding works or a diversion channel to prevent high levels of nitrate entering the canal from the river Cam.

Another highly successful water transfer scheme has operated in Lincolnshire since the 1970's, whereby water from the river Trent is pumped into the Fossdyke Canal from where it runs by gravity to Lincoln and a 17.5km long pipeline subsequently feeds into the River Ancholme. Water is extracted by Anglian Water at Cadney, as well as directly by a number of industrial extractors. The Environment Agency has recently expended a large sum of money in refurbishing pumping and control systems, and restoring a number of structures including the Grade II listed suspension bridge at Horkstowe, designed by Sir John Rennie. In addition, as the navigation authority, EA has renovated lock machinery and restored navigation though Harlem Hill lock, providing an additional 4km of amenity waterway.

*Stephen Peters*

### **FANCY A GOLD LICENCE THIS YEAR? BEWARE!**



Including prompt payment discount, for a 57 foot nb the BW Licence is £513. The Gold Licence is £160 more at £673. For £98.10 you can get a month on the Thames with no advance commitment. The problem is the 5.5% increase on 1/1/05 to the whole Gold Licence. We strongly advise you to do your sums.

# The Great Gate Debate

Just for a bit of fun we ran a website survey on this. Unfortunately only 36 responses came in, 12 voted CLOSED, 24 for leaving them OPEN.

From the comments added it appeared that consistency and good manners were the main reasons for closing exit gates:-

*'It depends upon where you are on the system as to whether the person who said that leaving them open gives a 50% chance of saving time for following boaters. It certainly doesn't near hire bases. If closing them is the general rule then the same person is antisocial to flout it.'*

*'BW seem to have decided on this policy, and it does bring consistency if we all follow it. At the moment we seemed to have stirred up some anarchy. We followed a single "working boat" down Hatton. He wouldn't share locks, and he left all the gates open. Totally anti-social, and caused a lot of extra work for two elderly people even though we found another boat to share the work'*

*'I agree with the person who said that we must be consistent. I vote for consistently closing all gates. As another person said, it is an absolute pain if you are following a boat where the crew always leave the gates open. If folk from the "Leave 'em open" brigade MUST have their way, can I suggest that they do close the gates if a boat is following behind, and there is no approaching boat in view.'*

Reasons for leaving them open were a bit more 'scientific':-

- '1. 50/50 chance of lock being set for one.*
- 2. Not having to come into the bank to let crew on or off - a big plus especially in windy conditons.*
- 3. Most locks leak when full so might as well leave upper gate open. Minimises effort. 50% of the time the next boat will be travelling in the opposite direction. Leaving the gates will save him lots of time (as he won't have to stop on the lock landing) as well as me. The other 50% of the time will inconvenience a boat that is following me. However, they will already have to have stopped on the lock landing so their additional effort is less significant.*

*However, this inconvenience to the boat behind is actually ZERO. This is because he won't need to close the gates behind him!!!*

*There is a potential concern about loss of water. This is only relevant for the last use of the lock for the day. It is not possible to know if you are the last boat. Anyway if significant water loss would result then BW should be fixing their gates. It is unreasonable to put us to lots of effort because of their poor maintenance. If the situation is critical at one lock then BW can erect signs. When BW introduced this measure several decades ago it was a blanket solution done with little thought. I believe that in 'the good old days' gates were always left open.*

*I have argued this view for many years. When I am cruising on my own I always take this approach.'*

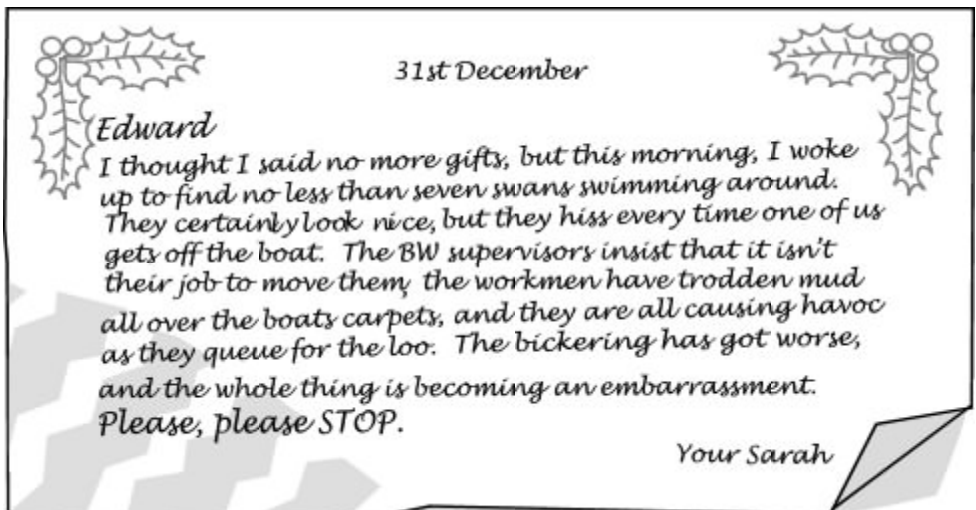
*'I boat single handed quite often, and I find it so much easier to leave the gates open. The system was originally designed with this in mind, as can be witnessed at the thirteen locks on the Macclesfield canal where all of the top gates are mitered. From the safety angle, I would also suggest that it is safer to leave the departure gates open to avoid any accident situations when crossing the opening. In discussions with former working boat people, they tell me that they never closed gates behind them; nor did they close lift/swing bridges after them. This raises another problem for discussion i.e. I would suggest that all lift/swing accommodation bridges should be left open. Again, this was the intention when the canals were designed and built as can be witnessed at the vast majority of these bridges where the bridge can only be operated from the off (non-towpath) side.'*

*'As most of them leak and a large number do not stay shut the suggestion does make sense.'*

*'Water Saving. Less chance of the lock being turned in your face.'*

The strange thing is that on the Narrowboatworld.com website, the email response was much more in favour of leaving gates closed. Whether this is in support of comments made by the columnists on the site or a true reflection of opinion is difficult to say.

We certainly don't yet have enough data to put a case to BW for a change in policy, so the argument will no doubt keep going over the convivial pint in that ever diminishing chamber of debate, the friendly local waterside pub. At least it can save you having to discuss religion, politics or continuous cruising!



## SOME FORTHCOMING CONSULTATIONS

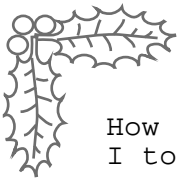
BW wants views on it proposed mowing regime, to be applied after the Robin Evans 'Veg Pledge' has been implemented, (a full width cut each year, the first before April 2005). The standards are laid out in a document (a screen-viewable version is on the NABO website, or as a large printable PDF on BW website). I would guess the argument is not with the standards themselves, but with which one should be applied in each location.

There is also a review of BW navigation signage coming up. The proposals seem to be based on a cross between road signs and European waterway ones.

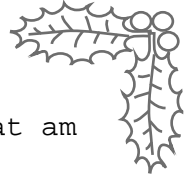
Another subject for discussion is tunnel lights. Modern lamps set to beam down a tunnel are blinding oncoming boaters, and the use of a white stern light as required by seagoing navigation lighting can also look like a distant boat coming the other way. There may be merit in using port and starboard lights with a tunnel light, to give oncoming boats a sense of your distance, and ensuring your beam is not directed straight ahead to avoid glare. Should there be a standard for a stern light to prevent shunts? Some comments have come in on this, but more welcome.

BW are to give us a draft of its boaters' facility guide. We shall try to ensure that it is available online so we can all check its accuracy and completeness.

A consultation finished, but views still welcome, is on the new Incident Report Form which BW have produced so it folds and sticks (preferably after you fill it in!) to make a Freepost envelope to BW HQ. Peter Wade, BW safety manager, says these are to be used for near misses and anti-social behaviour reports as well as actual accidents.



1st January



How am I to get through to you? What am I to do with eight assorted anchors, complete with chains and warps? The BW supervisors tell us we may not leave them on the bank, the workmen have sat themselves down in the forward cabin and won't budge - the redhead is the worst, issuing orders and instructions that he expects to be obeyed. Is this some kind of joke? If so, I don't find it very amusing. And if I see that cardboard workman again .....

Sarah



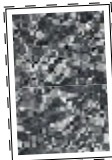
## NOTICES

### POST FOR NABO NEWS

For issue 1/05 please send contributions to

48 Old Lane, Bramhope,  
Leeds LS16 9AZ

E-mail much better if possible-  
[news.editor@nabo.org.uk](mailto:news.editor@nabo.org.uk)



### DID YOU KNOW?

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

### YORKSHIRE SECRETARY

Your hard pressed General Secretary is finding it increasingly difficult to do justice to the task of keeping an eye on the Yorkshire waterways, not least because the user group meeting dates are now set during April and October when she is usually afloat and therefore away from home.

For the time being, she is looking after members concerns, but ideally, would like someone else to take on the role. If you can help, even if only by attending some meetings, she would be delighted to hear from you.

### 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](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.

Text your waterway reports to: **07961 001814**

**07989 441674**

**07930 419 981**



# RIVERS



## THE RIVER WYE

NABO continues to take a keen interest in the newly created Wye Navigation, now controlled by the Environment Agency, and we receive copies of the minutes and agenda papers which are considered by the Wye Navigation Advisory Committee. From time to time we also receive invitations to attend other allied group events. We have recently been invited to a "Mink Training Day" to be held at an obscure village hall location somewhere between Hereford and Abergavenny. The day would cover aspects of mink ecology, focussing on their control. Is there much demand for trained mink, we ask ourselves!

## FREIGHT RETURNS TO RIVER SEVERN

Commercial activity is set to return to the River Severn in the New Year. With the aid of a Freight Facilities Grant totalling about £1m, RMC Materials have commenced construction of new wharves costing in excess of £2.5m to handle sand and gravel which will be transported by water.

One of the two new wharves is situated just downstream from Upton-upon-Severn adjacent to the existing handling plant at Ryall. This will receive aggregate which will be shipped up from the company's quarry at Ripple. The second wharf is being built at Ripple immediately adjacent to the M.50 Queenhill Viaduct.

It is anticipated that 180-tonne barges will transport 275,000 tonnes of aggregates each year between Ripple and Ryall. This equates to some 30 barge-loads every week along this two-mile long section of river. A further 65,000 tonnes of washed and graded aggregate will be transported from Ryall to Gloucester where the company has a ready-mixed concrete plant alongside the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal. This will entail approximately 7 barge-loads every week and the regular use of large vessels will be welcomed by pleasure boaters who have long complained about the lack of dredging along the river, especially in the narrow Partings near Gloucester.

It is estimated that use of water-borne transport will reduce lorry movements on local roads by approximately 34,000 journeys per annum - a reduction of over 60 per cent of the total number of vehicles.

NABO welcomes the return of commercial carrying on the River Severn, albeit on a fairly modest scale compared with yesteryear, and we believe boat owners will also be pleased to see the under-used river making its contribution to reducing congestion and pollution on the local road network.

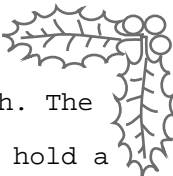
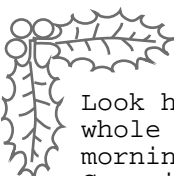
We have expressed our support to RMC for its far-sighted initiative and we have also suggested that their barge operators be invited to liaise with our Association to ensure that all river users are aware of the safety issues associated with the movement of these large vessels.

## GREAT OUSE CLOSURES

NABO and other user groups have been consulted on the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway whose route is to cross the Great Ouse using a disused railway viaduct between Holywell and St Ives. Redecking this bridge may cause navigation closures and the following undertakings have been given:-

1. That closure of the navigation, in so far as required, will not exceed one period of a maximum of 28 days and another of a maximum of 14 days.
2. That during those periods, in addition to such other periods (if any) as the contractor may be able to allow, passage will not be prevented on Sundays during daylight hours between 8.00am and 6.00pm.
3. That no closure will take place during the months of July and August nor during any week that has a Bank Holiday in it.
4. Notice will be given not less than three months in advance in writing of the intended commencement and periods of closure, and notice will be given in writing should adverse weather or other unexpected events require some delay in relation to such a commencement or period.

2nd January



Look here Edward, this has gone far enough. The whole of NABO Council has turned up this morning, saying we had agreed for them to hold a Council meeting on our boat, The supervisors have spotted some plantain and declared our mooring to be an SSSI, so that we've been fenced off and can't go anywhere, The RSPCA has arrived to deal with the swans but can't get anywhere near them as they have started building nests on the bank - no-one can get off their boats, including the poor dog who has nowhere to go, and everyone on the moorings is complaining. All the people are eating us out of house and home, so if you value our friendship, which I do less and less, kindly stop this ridiculous behaviour at once.

Sarah



**W**hen I was about eight, I used to be sent to stay with my Auntie Ada and Uncle Bob in their cottage at Croxley Green, Herts, while Mum and Dad went off on holiday without me and did what Mums and Dads do when their little boys aren't around to get in the way. Auntie Ada was my paternal Grandfather's sister. They were the offspring of my Great Grandmother, Emma, who lived beside the Grand Union at Ricky. She had the same surname as us, as she was not then married, and had 8 kids, all with different fathers (off the cut?).

Uncle Bob was a fireman at Dickinson's Mill, beside the canal at Cassio, long since demolished. He was very old fashioned. He would put on a tie to listen to the BBC news on his wireless that looked like a wooden church window.

They had no electricrery then. Everything was gas powered except the wireless. CORGI would have had a mad fit. Auntie Ada was a dab hand at wielding a gas poker on a long length of perishing rubber hose to light her hopper, or the gas mantles in the sitting room. I would literally have to light my way to bed in the little room above the scullery with a candle, though I was never dubbed Wee Willie.

I can remember the lamplighter coming round with his pole, hooking the levers on the streetlamps outside the cottage. One of my hobbies there was watching the lorries breaking down on Scots Hill.

Auntie Ada would tell me to stay away from the canal, so naturally that was the first place I headed for. I became noticed by some of the regular BWB boaters at my usual haunt between Lot Mead Lock (Walkers) and Batchworth Locks. I was even given rides on the counters of some of the boats. I remember them being very scruffy in their yellow and blue livery. I would be told off for trying to peer inside the cabins.

There wasn't much decoration. Any 'roses and castles' were tatty transfers.

Strangely, many of the boats seemed to be single handed, and motor boats were always referred to as 'monkeys'. I don't remember seeing many butties, or families living aboard, but those pairs that did pass through were going long distance to and from Brum. They always stayed breasted up, and probably did so all the way up to Cowroast.

Loads were mostly pulp or coal going to various Dickinson mills at Croxley, Nash, or Apsley. Often boats heading back to Brentford were running empty. Most of the paper reels went by lorry. If 'Walkers' was set against a boat going up hill, the steerer would nudge his boat into the mitreposts and leap off leaving the motor running. He would reset the lock, and when the levels equalised the boat would push the lower gates open on its own and chug into the chamber while the

steerer dropped the paddles. The stempost would ram the top cill with a shuddering bang. The steerer would then wind up the ground paddles, and top gate paddles, then leap down on to the cabin top. The bottom gates would be left to crash shut of their own accord.

As the lock filled, the boat would ride up over the cill, and ram the top gates. Just before the water levelled, the steerer would open the throttle, and in a cloud of acrid blue exhaust smoke, force the boat into the gates, pushing them open against the remaining pressure. I can still remember the painful groaning of the gate timbers as the steel hulls scraped through. Gates were always left open, and paddle gear left raised. What was the point of getting off the boat again, when the next steerer had to anyway! Paddles were always dropped under their own weight too. On a frosty morning the keeper at Batchworth knew a boat was coming when he heard the ring of paddles being dropped echoing along the cut from Walkers.

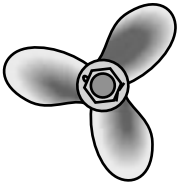
Going downhill with the lock set against the boat was more complicated, but once again, the boat was invariably left chugging slowly in gear against the gate heel post while the steerer went ashore to reset the lock. I don't ever remember boats being moored above the lock, though I can remember steerers using bow lines to pull gates open before entering the chamber. They seemed to use some kind of slip knot that released when the rope was pulled in the opposite direction as the boat passed the gate. Bow lines then trailed in the water until picked up with a boathook. I have never been able to discover how this knot was tied. As Batchworth lock had a keeper, the steerers didn't even bother getting off the counter there.

As a special treat I was allowed to accompany Uncle Bob when he crossed the road to the garage to change his wireless accumulator. The garage was next to the pub. In fact the pub had a petrol pump outside it. I would have to sit on the pub steps and wait while Uncle Bob went in for a pint or three, but I was usually given a packet of crisps to keep me quiet. These were Smith's Crisps, served in a proper paper bag, with a pinch of salt in a twist of blue paper inside. I think they cost thruppence, and held about a quarter of a sliced potato. Of course, Auntie Ada thought Uncle Bob had to wait while the accumulator was being recharged. I don't think she ever knew that he exchanged them. Some accumulators seemed to take longer to recharge than others! There appeared to be a two pint accumulator and a three pint one.

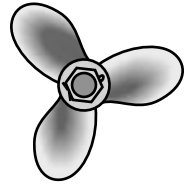
That pub, the Sportsman, at Croxley Green still exists, though the garage has long since gone. As a non-canalside canalside pub it is still a best kept secret with the local boating community from Batchworth, Common Moor, and Cassio, being a pleasant walk through the woods from Lot Mead Lock. Try it if you are in the area. It is opposite Croxley Green Parish Church. You will find a warm welcome, and a good selection of 'proper beer', and there is usually a table of boaters there putting the world to rights. Saturday nights are always good, with a local blues band playing, and there are often music sessions on Sunday afternoons. Pool is sacred.

Mine's a cider topped. Cheers...

*Tony Haynes*  
nb Dreamcatcher  
Basingstoke Canal Centre (2004)



# the mad professor



Just when I thought I could relax after last month's burst of creativity, I find folks are starting to ask me questions. Well, I suppose what I have on the back of this envelope can wait (thank you Vodafone - I've recycled the contents but at least us ecology minded types can get even more use out of paper if you leave us some space).

Anyway, this is what she said:-

Dear T.P.M. (never did like typewriters, I'm sure she would have got my initials the right way round with a pen!)

Perhaps being a Professor you could help me with a problem I have been pondering for some time. Actually it has been about six years, the same amount of time since we acquired our new boat. The problem is the husband enjoys a bit of experimentation (settle down), and fancied a narrow-beam Dutch Barge, I still can't see what was wrong with real narrowboats, but eventually we took delivery.

Now the problem is that we soon noticed, that even though we slow down to tick over, (even for fishermen) we seem to cause much more disturbance to moored boats than most ordinary narrowboats, and our previous narrowboats. Even when we are following another boat, and going at the same speed. The only things we can put this down to is either hull shape, or draught. We don't think shape is the problem, as apart from the sharp bow, we are basically a narrowboat underneath, and don't create undue wash. So is it draught? We draw 2'10" at rest, and probably another couple of inches when cruising. Therefore we displace more water, this has to go somewhere, so does it create more drag as it rushes down the sides? If so how do we cure this?

We have the engine tick over as low as we can adjust it. On a gps we pass boats at 1.8-2mph and cruise at 3.5-3.8mph. Has anyone else checked their speed? When buying a boat even experienced boaters are very much in the hands of their builder with regard to engine size and prop size. Does size matter? In this climate of bigger must be better. We are based on the Grand Union, so it is not as much of a problem as on narrow canals, when quite often we pass boats in neutral. There must be other boats out there with this problem. You see cars with stickers saying "child on board" or "show dogs in transit", perhaps we could display one saying "please excuse my drag, but I have a big bottom!"

All advice gratefully received, (as long as it isn't rude and doesn't cost money)

yours worried wife of ndb P.M.

I don't know if I need to say anything - you have answered it yourself. But you're not the only one to blame, the speed of the back current depends on how fast you are going and how much of the channel your boat takes up. But, as I said last time, as water flows it's level drops, making the channel shallower, so your big bottom takes up even more of it and, to get past, the water has to flow even faster. OK - blame your bottom, but also blame the channel's bottom for being too close to the top. It's that dreaded 'D' word again (It's DREDGING in case you didn't know - Did you hear that, BW? - **DREDGING!**).

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## CAPTION COMPETITION

This poor chap could barely stand up after being rescued from the Staffs & Worcs outside the Tesco at Kidderminster, so we guess Wonky and his mates would have a few choice words.

Suggestions on a postcard or email to the editor please.



3rd January

As I write this letter, there are ten geese waddling up and down and crapping inside the boat: the stench is awful. The puddling clay has been trodden into the carpets, the Christmas tree is being used by the dog, the swans and workmen are making so much noise on the bank that we've been reported to the local office, (I'm surprised the neighbours could find it) and we've been threatened with eviction from the moorings. I shall never speak to you again.

Sarah

## **LOCAL USER GROUP MEETING QUESTIONNAIRE**

Many members volunteer to attend various local consultation meetings and council is asking for feedback on how the meetings go. To give you an idea of the things we need to know, here is a sample of a questionnaire you can obtain from the Chairman. Obviously the real version will leave space to write in!-

Did this meeting cover the right area?

Were there any areas in the Unit that no meeting covers?

Were the right users being invited?

Were the right BW staff present?

Was the date/time of the meeting convenient to users?

Was the venue of the meeting convenient to users?

How much notice did you get of the date of the next meeting?

Were you asked to tender agenda items within a realistic deadline?

How long in advance of meeting did you receive an agenda?

How long in advance of meeting did you receive information?

Was this information useful?

How good was the layout/acoustics of the room?

Were adequate refreshments:- Provided?

Available for purchase at the venue?

Unobtainable?

Did the meeting start on time?

Did the meeting include:- Notes of the Last Meeting?

If so were they accurate?

Matters Arising?

Any Other Business?

Date of the Next Meeting?

Were presentations:- Informative?

Excessive?

Too early in the meeting?

How many items were:- of no interest to users?

better suited to individual discussion with specific users?

better suited to discussion at a regional meeting?

better presented as written information?

How many of your questions were:- answered to your satisfaction in advance?

answered to your satisfaction at the meeting?

deferred but answered satisfactorily later?



deferred but not followed up as promised?  
deferred to next meeting?  
deferred and still pending?  
unanswered due to lack of time?  
refused altogether?

Was the meeting well chaired?

How satisfied did you feel when you left the meeting?

How long after meeting were 'notes' published

Did you get a copy?

Were they accurate?

14th January

This is the last straw. Eleven ducks, seven drakes, four ducks, which NEVER stop quacking, squabbling amongst themselves for sexual favours - can you imagine what you have done? The beat has now become something between a madhouse and Piccadilly Circus, and a man from the Council has just informed us that the beat has been declared unfit for human habitation and they intend to prosecute for nuisance. At least Mummy has been spared this last outrage: they took her away yesterday afternoon in an ambulance. I hope you're satisfied.

# FLY ON THE WALL



## at Council

I'm back on that wall and looking at a new face to Council meetings. Tony Haynes, your South Region representative has joined the regulars to cover a variety of subjects in a day of positive discussion. His subject of choice will be 'Cut Crime'

The AGM generated a review of AGMs past and thoughts of AGMs future - very Christmas Carol! But 'tis the season! And talking of Carols, your own Carole is feeling she has a hat too many and would like to hand over, or at least have some help with, the job of NE Regional Secretary. A big area to cover especially when the General Secretary's duties are taken into account. Any offers to Carole please.

Back to AGMs past. Previous locations were discussed and the success or otherwise of attracting members to the meetings. The Midlands has proved the most popular area with the largest number of members attending. It was agreed that, for future AGMs, the four 'corners' of the Birmingham area be used in rotation, retaining Lapworth and Stourbridge and maybe trying Stafford next year.

Council decided to try to find out why people joined and left the Organisation.

There has recently been a drop in the number of members due mainly to 'natural wastage', ie boat owners getting too old to boat or no longer having the funds, so new members are needed. Why do people join? Why did you join? Let Carole know - no - let other boaters know so they can join!

Your Chairman reported on a National User Group meeting with BW that he had been to in November. It was proposed that a National Consultative Council (NCC) be established to determine the common ground in the 40 or so organisations that BW consults and for relevant representatives to present cases to BW at Board level. It is hoped that it will be formed by March and have the first meeting then. Who funds it, and how, is also to be decided!

Your Vice Chairman was also there and tried unsuccessfully to get information on the number of new licences and the growth in the number of marinas. Boatbuilders discussed the effect on their business if there was a 'no mooring = no boat' policy.

There was a discussion in Council about the quality of User Group meetings. Sometimes a meeting would start with a presentation lasting an hour before anyone had the chance to put a point of view. Those attending such meetings are asked to give Council a standard on each meeting, maybe using a form with specific points to look at.

Your Chairman thanks everyone who sends in waterway reports to the

website. These go automatically to BW service managers so hopefully something gets done and fast. Next question is when should they be removed from the site? As soon as it's sorted? Or after an 'in case anything goes wrong' delay? Or is it interesting to have the history of maintenance? Should it be there? What do you think?

May your canals be open over the festive season.

Byeeeeeeeeee !



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# LETTERS



## Rafting Up

I was disappointed to read the report in NABO News that some narrowboat owners are reluctant to facilitate rafting up when moorings are scarce. Moorings for yachts are often scarce so yachtsmen are familiar with the process, regularly do it, and see no problem. It is of course irritating to have to clamber over several boats to reach one's own, but the alternative would be to be at anchor, go elsewhere or remain at sea, all of which may not be practical. Extricating boats in the morning can be complex but it adds to the fun. On the plus side, it is often very sociable.

For narrowboat crews to resist attempts at rafting up in crowded moorings is nothing short of acting "I'm alright Jack". Concerns about privacy, light and access are surely trivial compared with the seriousness of not being able to obtain a mooring.

I'm sure that most users would realise that rafting up on rivers where moorings are so scarce is the only way to share a waterway, especially when it is they who otherwise would not have a mooring. The River Trent would appear to be a good example.

There are examples on the Inland Waterways. Rafting up is normal at Torksey and common at various festivals. So, provided there is room, rafting up should be the accepted solution when space is limited.

Chris Boxall

## WOT? NO VAT FROM DOT?

I am beginning to have concerns about Dot. I know she is a worried woman but how did she come to overlook Value Added Tax during her foray into the V's?

I share the concern of a number of our members who fail to understand why BW

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imposes VAT on its river registration certificate charges, whereas the Environment Agency does not. The latter contends that as registration does not involve the receipt of goods or services (unlike licensing for the canals), VAT should not be applied.

Maybe NABO should dedicate some of its reserved funds to addressing this issue and seeking expert opinion. I know boaters on BW rivers would welcome a reduction in charges!

Stephen Peters

### Lavender Blues

Why do sanitary stations need a thick wall of dubious cleanliness at the front, on which one must lean to reach the flushing handle right at the back. I doubt whether very short people would be able to reach even then.

And why do indoor sanitary stations need expensive, stainless-steel, doors over the hopper? Can anyone tell me?

Ron Bingham

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### Brassed off?

Referring to Nigel Parkinson's article in the 5/04 issue of NN, he makes brass cleaning sound like hard work! I recommend Tuff Scrub - available from Lakeland Ltd, £4.50 for a pack of two - for removing the tarnish. This is a Brillo-type pad, made from aluminium (won't rust) with a sponge interior, and four times the size. Use this with some washing up liquid, and it works like magic. For the shine, try a Magicloth, again from Lakeland. This has the polish in it, so no need for tins of polish. The cloth goes on working, even when it is black, until it falls apart. Easy peasy!!!!

Carole Sampson

Talking of Lakeland Ltd, I see they do a Wash-it Laundry Ball which is supposed to last eighty washes in a washing machine, doing away with detergents and the need to rinse. Has anybody tried one and seen whether it is too good to be true? Could this be the answer to pollution of the cut and queues at water points. Ed.





Creep and Crawl  
Solicitors at Law

5th January 2005

Edward Jenerus Esq.  
Lock View Cottage  
Sodbury on the Marsh  
Boghamptonshire

Sir

Our client, Miss Sarah Locke, instructs me to inform you that with the arrival on her boat at half-past seven this morning of twelve assorted anglers and cyclists, their families, and several of their friends, she has no course left open to her but to seek an injunction to prevent your importuning her further. I am making arrangements for the return of much assorted goods, livestock and staff.

I am, Sir, Yours faithfully

G Creep  
Solicitor-at-law

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