

## **THE MAGAZINE OF THE**



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

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# **ISSUE 1/05 - February 2005**

**EA T&WA Order / Cut Crime / New BSS**

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## 2005 CALENDAR

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

# CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



May I offer somewhat belated wishes for a happy New Year to you all.

I am afraid this issue might be a bit heavy going, but perhaps you like it that way. The only recognition for our attempts to lighten the last one came from the ladies at BW HQ who felt for Emily, and a comment that I am wasted on NABO and should take up graphic design for a living. Credit for that should go to my Mac. Not one of you suggested a caption for Wonky.

There is a lot going on regarding the position of 'User Groups' in the waterways scene at present. BW has now set in motion the National Consultative Council concept, which is likely to be called NWAFC, the National Waterways Advisory Forum, which you can learn more about in the article '*Not Another Body?*'.

Almost by coincidence, the Environment Agency has proposals for an additional forum to monitor its application of the new powers it seeks. One does wonder if the authorities are conspiring to stretch the resources of the national user groups to breaking point. Is 'consultation' a good thing we can have too much of?

Anyway we will do our best on your behalf.

## 2005 - A Flying Start



Your chairman started the year with three meetings within six days, all at

the London Boat Show, with a fourth on offer which he was able to delegate, giving someone else the chance of a free ticket. Believe it or not, it was not only more convenient to fly down but also **cheaper!** We live only five minutes from Leeds/Bradford airport, and London City is almost next door to ExCeL where the show is now held. Since last November there has been a new service of four flights a day each way between the two, and for the boat show there was a free shuttle bus to the venue with a genuine East-ender giving the commentary!

First impression of the show was white. White water on the video display screens, hectares of white GRP, white sails, and white people (particularly me after the landing on the 7th – you might recall it was a bit windy in early January!) You will see another significance of the remark about white people later. My reason for being there was another EA 'Harmony' meeting, so I sought out its stand next to the inland waterway feature. This was not difficult to find, a huge '*Water-scape*' banner above and surrounded by four foot high vegetation. I do accept that BW have until the end of March to honour the 'Veg Pledge'!

I managed a swift one at the feature's Fox@Waterside pub, taking delight in the sonority of a knock on its 'stone' walls. London Pride in plastic, but welcome nonetheless. The meeting gave me little extra time to browse, but I did collect a few booklets for the NABO cruise before up and away to enjoy a somewhat bumpy panorama of our beloved capital's river winding its way worm-like through the bright lights of the city as we headed north.

The next two meetings were the BSS Open on the 11th and the RYA Inland Navigation Panel on the 12th, so back into the ATR42 turboprop, this time in the company of Ian White, erstwhile Acting General Manager BW South-east, but still AINA chairman and 'Admiral of the Blue Twine Line' (otherwise known as the BW maintenance fleet). He was telling me he had the dubious honour of a double role in the abandonment of lock gate manufacture at Bulbourne, but that the improvement in efficiency had exceeded all expectations and gates were being made a year ahead of schedule. He was flying down to give a presentation at the BSS meeting and then on to Glasgow. I gather he made it in spite of the storms.

Tony Haynes and Trevor Rogers were also at the BSS meeting, as was one James Mason. Tony's account of it is in this issue.

I was due to stay with a friend overnight and had time to kill to avoid the rush hour, so I succumbed to emotional blackmail, and the offer of somewhere to rest my weary limbs, to hear some of a presentation on the EA stand about Social Inclusion.

A suited individual was proclaiming he had seen no other black people at the show and didn't feel particularly welcome himself. It must be down to something more than skin deep – I didn't see any other men with hair about their shoulders, but I wasn't in any way shunned. Maybe us Brits have brine in our veins and folks of African ancestry don't, but he did have a point that there are more ethnic groups that could enjoy being afloat. What wasn't mentioned was the social exclusion of boat dwellers, but that was a can of worms I didn't have the stamina to open.

My first duty on the next day was to give the editor of *Waterfront*, the BW magazine for licence holders, an interview for a feature on NABO they plan for the Spring edition. This will hit our target audience fair and square so I would like to think we can gain some members.

Then it was off to a meeting of the Royal Yachting Association's Inland Navigation Committee (INC) on which NABO has had a seat for longer than I have been involved in the association's representation department.

I had attended one before being NABO chairman, but I still had a lot to learn as to what NABO could offer and gain from being affiliated to the RYA. I know a lot of people think yachts mean sails and so they wonder what the RYA has to do with canals. The RYA are aware of this sentiment too, but I don't think there is any harm in some links, provided it doesn't harm our independence and the limitations of both organisations are recognised. Certainly in the field of training courses in helmsmanship and VHF radio, the RYA has much to offer our membership, and they are fighting the red diesel issue too, or so we are led to believe.

Whether I shall be boarding flight BD503 on your behalf again I don't know. The plane had palm trees painted on the tail advertising flights to Barbados. I am not sure I would want to fly there in a plane like that, or would I?

*Stuart*

# British Waterways Incident Report Form

You should find one with this issue of NABO News. Keep it dry otherwise you won't be able to open it when you need it! We have agreed to distribute them for BW not only for reporting physical safety issues but also as part of the **Cut Crime** initiative.



British Waterways says:-

*Every organisation has a legal duty to record and report certain types of accidents/injuries to their employees. However many do not consider or record incidents and accidents involving members of the public.*

*We all want our users and visitors to return home safely after enjoying their visit to our waterways. Incidents are rare but unfortunately they do occasionally occur. When they do it is important that all parties involved in the incident learn from it, and where appropriate make changes to reduce the likelihood of it happening again.*

*Although the number of recorded accidents is small, approximately 1:1,000,000 visitors, by looking at trends for similar activities/organisations we acknowledged that the incidents reported were only a percentage of those that occur. It has also been demonstrated that for every injury that does occur there are likely to be many "near misses". It has been proven, by reducing the number of "near misses" an organisation can also reduce the number of injury accidents.*

*But how can we reduce the number of "near misses" and consequently the number of injuries to our users and visitors, unless we get to know what is happening?*

*Reporting incidents, accidents and near misses is key.*

*We have developed an incident report form to allow users of the water-space and other visitors to report any incident, accident or near miss that they have been involved in or have witnessed on our property.*

*The form has been designed to gather core information about any incident by asking the following:*

- What happened?*
- When did it happen?*
- Where did it happen?*
- Who was involved?*

*We also request that the person completing the form provides information about any hospital treatment that is needed, any police involvement and contact details of the person reporting so we can investigate the incident if appropriate.*

*The forms are available in paper format or downloadable from our web-site. Once completed the form can be returned by post or handed in at the local BW office for processing.*

*If you need further information about visitor incident reporting contact your local BW office or The Safety Team, British Waterways, Watford.*

# EA to become a law unto itself? - Episode 2

As you should have gathered from the article in the previous issue, the Environment Agency (EA) stirred up a bit of a hornet's nest by trying to acquire wide ranging powers through a Transport and Works Order to harmonise its charging regime and regulations on its various rivers. This aim is fine by us, especially if it leads to harmonisation with BW and others. It is the means to this end that is causing the trouble.

The EA is now trying to impress upon us that the funds and opportunity to get the Order through were, in effect, an unrepeatable offer, but unfortunately this has meant exposing its apparent greed for powers to the public gaze and maybe it hoped not too many people would notice.

The EA also claims that it has had these powers all along, albeit regionally, and not abused them. However in the current climate of openness and accountability it comes as no surprise that the extent of them would be questioned, as would the strength of EA's commitment not to abuse them in the future.

Part of the problem is that said public do not all understand that the wording of an Order like this cannot be too specific, and so it has to have many repetitions of phrases like, '*...as the Agency sees fit*'. On the surface this may seem excessive, but take, for instance, the clause in the Order empowering EA to require safety standards. If this specifically named the BSS, and at a later date the BSS Office decided to change the name of the scheme, the EA would then be without the legal power to ensure boats on its rivers were safe. How the Agency intends to '*see fit*' is the subject of its '*Memorandum of Understanding*'.

Up till now EA has been used to dealing with regional river boating groups. However one of the consequences of bringing together its navigations is having to deal more with national bodies, which has perhaps been a bit of a shock to its culture.

Its contact with the likes of the IWA, RYA, BMF, BCU and other bodies, including NABO, is normally through meetings of the NNUF (National Navigation Users Forum) twice a year. By the conduct of the last one, held at the London headquarters of the Mother's Union, with notes of the previous meeting only being available just a few days in advance, it was felt that those in the EA navigation department weren't taking us seriously enough. I wouldn't want to cast aspersions against their consideration for us by holding the meeting at a venue close to Westminster on the same day as the Parliamentary Waterways Group, but this did result in some of their major players having 'more pressing' engagements. Conspicuous by his absence was John Redmond, who was responsible for the Transport and Works Act Order which should have ranked top priority when it was so close to the deadline for objections.

In contrast, the next meeting was a gathering of representatives of 'objecting groups' in the EA boardroom in Millbank Towers. This was held in a businesslike manner with all the appropriate EA people present. What they learnt there was that we were not happy with EA's consultation methods, including the rather casual announcement of the 5.5% fee rise, and some of us had beefed up our objections to the Order at the last minute almost as a protest. Certainly our collective trust of EA had taken a knock and many of us had concurred, in

advance, to test its commitment to its 'Memorandum of Understanding' (MoU). We left the meeting still disappointed with the lack of importance EA seemed to give to this commitment, as shown by its late appearance on the agenda and how little time was given to it.

All this, and a recommendation for EA to take a look at BW's accountability initiatives, put an effective damper on the 'season of good will' for some of EA's senior staff as they had to show the Secretary of State that sufficient progress was being made to justify extending the consultation deadline beyond Christmas Eve. We were treated to an updated MoU, a document outlining EA's appeals procedures (reproduced in this issue) and proposals for another forum group specifically to monitor the application and progress of the MoU.

Since then EA has met us again, at the London Boat Show, and promised that:-

- The '*adjacent waters*' clause would be changed to exclude other navigation authority waters.
- A consultation clause would be put to the Sec of State for inclusion in the Order which will link to a more detailed statement in the MoU:-  
    *“25A. - Before adopting any general proposals for the implementation of this Order or materially modifying any such proposals once they have been adopted, the Agency must consult with such organisations as appear to the Agency to be representative of users of the waterways as it sees fit.”*
- A full remit framework would be defined for the new T&WA Order Forum, which is the assembly EA proposes to satisfy its obligations as above.
- The BSS clause in the MoU would be reworded to be more specific.
- The effectiveness of the Parliamentary Ombudsman's dealings with navigation related complaints would be investigated.
- The replies to objectors would comprise a general statement answering points in common to more than one objector with an individual letter answering points specific to individual objections, and
- these would be sent to arrive in time to be discussed at our January Council meeting.

We have had the documents and Council has now agreed to withdraw the objections to the Order provided the Secretary of State agrees to the insertion of Clause 25A and the change to the '*adjacent waters*' clause. We also thought it appropriate to sign the Memorandum of Understanding, even though both the signature and the document itself have little legal standing, mainly to indicate our commitment to continued consultation.

There is much to be done by both sides, particularly as regards EA's 'harmonised' charging scheme which NABO policy dictates should be compatible with BW and other authorities. It should be noted that this policy does not imply a universal acceptance of BW's current system, merely that there should be compatibility, and that, should charging structures come up for consultation again, NABO is still willing to discuss alternatives such as lengthxbeam, occupancy, or even a flat rate fee.



# CUT CRIME

You may have heard the stories.

An elderly couple working through a lock in their boat. A group of teenage youths are hanging about. Suddenly two of them leap on to the boat, hoods up, and in seconds rush through the cabin stealing anything they can get their hands on. They leap off the boat from the bow-deck and the group make their escape before the couple have time to react. They call it 'steaming'.

A hire boat passing under a bridge. A group of children duck down behind the parapet. As the boat's stern enters the arch, half a paving slab is dropped from the bridge. Luckily it misses the steerer, but it does considerable damage to paintwork. It could have sunk a grp boat.

A trip boat full of passengers celebrating a birthday. It cruises past a public park. Suddenly a window is shattered by a flying stone. Fortunately no-one is injured, but set-out food is ruined by granules of toughened glass.

A dog walker on the towpath. She passes two drunken youths on a bench. One of them gets on to all fours and starts barking stupidly at her dogs. She tells him not to be silly. He throws her bodily into the canal, and one of her dogs after her.

Similar tales are told in canalside pubs and clubs and in queues for locks, but are they true? Most folks cruise about the system without problem. They tend to think these incidences are exaggerated. Others are fully aware of the dangers, and the danger areas, but are frustrated by lack of response to their calls for help.

What is the truth of the matter?

Is cut crime on the increase?

British Waterways and the National Association of Boat Owners have combined their resources to find out.

On the NABO website, [www.nabo.org.uk/ww\\_reports/](http://www.nabo.org.uk/ww_reports/) you can find the Waterways Reports Forum. This board is already used by boaters, whether NABO members or not. On it they report problems of all kinds encountered around the system on a day-by-day basis. Using simple keywords in a report's title, the reports are collated and quickly passed on to the relevant department of the waterway authority concerned. The key words include SAFETY - for any threat to human (or pet) well-being whilst on the waterway, and CUT CRIME - for any report regarding threatening or anti-social behaviour.

If you don't have access to the internet, don't worry. You can text your reports to **07930 419981**. Don't forget to clearly identify the location. The reports will then be added to the forum.



British Waterways have produced a Freepost Visitor Incident Report Form (See article on Page 14). These are available at BW offices and outlets. They are being distributed with copies of their magazine *Waterfront*. Also they will be inserted into copies of NABO News, (now available at £1 for non-members, but still free to members). The forms can also be downloaded at:-

**[www.britishwaterways.co.uk/responsibilities/safety/visitor\\_incident\\_reporting.html](http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/responsibilities/safety/visitor_incident_reporting.html)**

These forms can be used to report any incident, accident or 'near miss' that anyone, not just boaters, may witness or be involved in while visiting or using BW sites. The information given will help with investigation of the cause of the problem, minimise the risk of it happening again and where practical instigate the removal of potential hazards.

The forms can also be used to report any acts of vandalism or threatening behaviour.

All such reports, either through the NABO Waterways Reports Forum, or through the BW Freepost Forms, will be collated on a BW data base. Half season and full season summaries of these incidents will be produced. Thus, this year, we hope to obtain a true picture of the extent of the problem, and problem areas nationwide. These summaries will be used to supplement police reports, and to make local authorities and government aware of what is happening.

However, ALL incidences of intimidation, vandalism, or crime MUST be reported to the police using the 999 emergency system. Thus the incident will be logged. It may result only in the issue of a crime number, but that helps. The more such incidences are reported, the more we are likely to see our towpaths patrolled.

Apart from reporting the crimes, what else can we do to help ourselves? You will hear all sorts of suspect advice. Carry a catapult; an air gun; a paint-ball gun; a high pressure water-gun; a base-ball bat. You would be foolish to do so. Any of these, if brandished, would be regarded by police as offensive weapons. One boater has a criminal record because he chased a gang of youths with his air rifle... straight into the arms of the police. The jobs used their mobile phones to report a man chasing them with a gun.

Defensive weapons should be restricted to a camera, or better a camcorder. Police will be interested in photographs or video footage. It helps them identify the youths. But they should be used discretely. Apart from being a target for thieves use of such equipment can back-fire. I was personally reported to police for paedophile behaviour after filming a group of fourteen year old youths who were known to have smashed windows on our trip boat. Luckily the local bobbies who were sent to pick me up for questioning knew what I was doing, and why. In fact they had encouraged it.

Here on the Basingstoke Canal we suffered many incidences last year. A work boat was sunk. A dredger was trashed. A rowing boat was stolen and sunk. Two windows were smashed on a trip boat. A bottle was thrown at a trip boat steerer. Houses near a lock-flight have had windows broken by stone-throwers on the

towpath. A canal ranger's van was pelted with stones while he was still in it! Finally £1,000 of damage was done to our car....because we had reported the youths to the police.

But we have not given in. We are starting a Canal Watch Scheme for the entire Surrey length of the canal. This will be similar to a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, except it is linear, and crosses at least three police boundaries. It will not only involve riparian property owners and boaters. We hope to recruit any interested users of the towpath too. Fishermen, joggers, dog-walkers, cyclists... they will all be leafleted and invited to join the scheme. Badges will be issued. Signs will be erected along the towpath on numbered posts, so that remote areas can be quickly identified by emergency services.

Already we have the encouragement of a local MP, police, and the Basingstoke Canal Authority who will help administer the scheme. Bob Potter of Lakeside World Darts fame is sponsoring our efforts.

We are strongly advising people not to get personally involved with, or confront the youths, but to simply report any incidences or gangs of youths behaving badly. When the gangs find they are being watched, and that people do care about our environment, they will move on. They are only hanging around now because they think nobody is bothered about what happens on the towpath.

If youths are caught committing cut crime they will be prosecuted, resulting in the issue of Antisocial Behaviour Orders or Exclusion Orders banning them from the towpath. With an election coming, dealing with antisocial behaviour is high profile politics at present. We expect results.

The stories at the head of this article? Yes.... unfortunately they are all true. The only arrest to ensue was that of the drunken youth who threw the dog-walker into the canal. A burly passer-by was able to sit on him until police arrived. Others rescued the poor woman and her dog. Hopefully, the Canal Watch Scheme will prevent further incidences like this, before they occur.

Please don't be put off boating by this article. It is still true that the vast majority of boaters do not suffer any such problems. You can also help yourself by avoiding trouble. During school holidays cruise through problem areas in the mornings, before the yobs have crawled out of their cesspits. If gangs of youths are seen gathering on the towpath, lock your doors. Don't be intimidated into giving anyone a ride. Don't provoke them. Ignore them and their taunts. If youths or children are congregating on a bridge, and you are worried about passing underneath, then don't. Moor up. Wait until another boat comes along. Land an adult with a camera to watch the youths as you pass through. They won't do anything while there is a witness to hand. That is the principle of the Canal Watch Scheme. We intend to watch and report, and thus cut crime.

Above all, enjoy your boating. And stay safe.

*Tony Haynes*

# EA's Complaints Procedure

British Waterways' complaints procedure is being well circulated and was summarised in this magazine early last year, but who knows how to voice disgruntlement about the EA? As part of the consultation debate we have been sent this 'draft' of EA's procedure. We hope you will not have need of it but in case you do it might be worth hanging on to this issue:-

*The routes of appeal currently available to persons unhappy about the manner in which the Environment Agency performs its navigation functions are as follows:*

1. *Statutory Appeal Mechanisms*
2. *Judicial Review*
3. *Internal Complaints Procedure*
4. *Ombudsman*
5. *Complaint to the Secretary of State*

## **1. Statutory Appeal Mechanisms**

*The majority of the our functions are governed by specific sections of legislation and have individual appeal processes. The appeal processes relating to the Navigation function vary between regions due to each region being governed by different legislation. By and large however the appeal processes appear not to have been used for many years.*

*Full details of the relevant sections of legislation for each region can be supplied on request. The new Order will not effect the existence of these statutory mechanisms.*

## **2. Judicial Review**

*Decisions or Acts of a public body such as the Environment Agency are open to challenge by an aggrieved individual in the Administrative division of the High Court. judicial review, as the words imply, is not an appeal from a decision but a review of the manner in which the decision was made. The purpose of judicial review therefore is to ensure that an individual is given fair treatment. Judicial review lies against any body charged with the performance of a public duty.*

*The key points are that complainant must have a sufficient interest in the matter to which the application relates. Furthermore there must be some grounds for challenging the decision-making process i.e. illegality, impropriety or irrationality.*

*The procedure for applying for judicial review is set out in Part 54 of the Civil Procedure Rules*

## **3. Environment Agency's Internal Complaints Procedure**

*Our complaint's procedure is detailed in a leaflet which is available on request and on the web site at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk) We have a standard procedure designed to ensure that the complaint is investigated fully and fairly.*

*On receipt the complaint is logged and acknowledged. If possible the complaint is dealt with immediately. Where this is not possible the complainant will be contacted to ensure that we have understood the complaint correctly and to confirm to the complainant as to who is dealing with the matter and how they can be contacted.*

*We will then investigate the complaint and where possible send a written response within*

10 days. If the matter requires further attention this will be advised to the complainant with an explanation of the reason for the delay.

If at the conclusion of the investigation the complainant is not satisfied with our reply they should contact us again explaining why they are not satisfied. The matter will then be investigated again at a more senior level.

#### **4. Making a Complaint to the Ombudsman**

The Environment Agency falls within the jurisdiction of two Ombudsmen. These are the Local Government Ombudsman who deals with complaints arising from our Flood Defence and Land Drainage function, and the Parliamentary Ombudsman who would deal with complaints arising from the operation of any of our other functions including Navigation.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman undertakes independent investigations into complaints about government departments, a range of other public bodies including the Environment Agency for all matters other than flood defence/land drainage. She can consider any complaint that maladministration by those bodies has caused a complainant to suffer an injustice.

Generally, "maladministration" means poor administration or the wrong application of rules.

Some examples include:

- avoidable delay
- faulty procedures or failing to follow correct procedures
- not telling you about any rights of appeal you have
- unfairness, bias or prejudice
- giving advice which is misleading or inadequate
- refusing to answer reasonable questions
- discourtesy, and failure to apologise properly for errors
- mistakes in handling your claims
- not offering an adequate remedy where one is due

The Ombudsman cannot usually investigate any matter for which there is a remedy by appeal to an independent tribunal, or by proceedings in a court of law. Therefore the Ombudsman will only be able to deal with navigation complaints where there is no other forum.

#### **Procedure**

1. Usually, before you complain to her, the Ombudsman expects you first to have put your complaint including any claim for compensation, to the department or body concerned, using their internal complaints procedure.
2. If an unsatisfactory response is received from the organisation concerned then the next step is to raise the matter with your MP and ask him or her to refer it to the Ombudsman.
3. The Ombudsman will decide whether to investigate the complaint received from the MP based on the information and supporting documents received. The decision whether or not to investigate is sent to the MP
4. When the Ombudsman decides to investigate a complaint, the organisation concerned is

sent a summary of the complaint (which is copied to the MP), and asked to give comments.

5. The Ombudsman's officers will then examine the organisation's files and interview their staff. The formal investigation can be a long and detailed process, taking months rather than weeks. At its conclusion, a detailed report is sent to the MP, for the MP to pass on to the complainant.

### **Additional Routes**

If the complainant is not satisfied with either our internal response or that of the ombudsmen and they have a very serious allegation to make against us, then they may write a formal letter of complaint to the relevant secretary of state or minister.

*i.e.* The Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs at the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.

If the Environment Agency (Inland Waters) Order 2004 is passed into law then users will be able to appeal our actions using the methods outlined above. In addition to these there are the procedures set out in Articles 7 and 13

All this may seem a bit involved compared with BW's procedure, but in fairness that does not cover the first two routes given here. At the time of writing EA have been charged with finding out if any navigation complaints have been referred to the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

NABO has suggested to Stephen Edell that he could cover EA matters, and his only reservation was based on workload rather than principle. We will pursue this.

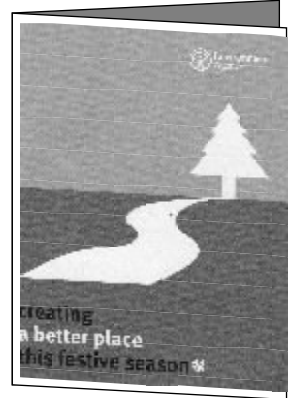
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## **Christmas Greetings from EA**

Sometimes in the heat of negotiation we tend to lose sight of EA Navigation's parent organisation. We were reminded by a Christmas card from EA which was printed in shades of bile green on Cyclus Offset, a rather rough looking stock using 100% recycled waste. The card gave me 10 ways I could re-use it, and the back was pre-scored so it could be torn apart to form ten gift tags, each with a message as to how to be more environmentally friendly:-

- Replant your Christmas tree
- Recycle more bottles, cans, paper and plastic
- Buy green gifts - Fairtrade produce, plants, events tickets etc.
- Re-use wrapping paper and make your old cards into gift tags
- Use cards made of recycled paper and those that benefit 'green' charities
- Use string, not un-biodegradable sticky tape
- Buy presents on-line or from one store to reduce travel emissions
- Take unwanted gifts to charity shops
- Reduce 'food-miles' by buying local produce
- Take your own bags to sales

You will have forgotten by next Christmas, won't you?



# "WORKING WITH THE BSS IS A HOOT!"

**BSS Open Meeting, London Boat Show, ExCeL, Tuesday 11th January 2005**

Some Impressions by Tony Haynes

I wasn't impressed with the BSS Open Meeting last year. It was held in a cramped room. The wall projector showed the BSS logo throughout... a wasted resource. The presentations from BSS bigwigs took far too long. It was boring [my neighbour fell asleep with his head on my shoulder... aaah], and questions from the floor were dominated by examiners with queries that could have been dealt with in house. There were no written hand-outs. I said so by email. My opinion was received gracefully.

This year was much better. The room was bigger. The wall projector was used efficiently to highlight subject headers. The presentations were briefer, and more to the point. Written hand-outs were available. Questions from the floor were from user organisations, apart from one from an examiner enquiring about training for the modernised scheme, a point already dealt with in the presentation.

The meeting was chaired by John Redmond as a penance for having to leave the meeting early last year. At least he has a sense of humour.

The bulk of the presentation was handled ably by Graham Watts, Manager of the Scheme.

The Broads Authority and the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation have now joined the scheme, making 13 navigational authorities participating, giving coverage of some 70% of navigational waters.

The very welcome modernised and simplified scheme will come into effect on 1st April 2005. It is now reduced to 32 General Requirements for privately owned boats. A summary of these can be obtained from Watford free\*. A comprehensive guide will also be available at production cost price. Hire boats and trip boats carrying up to 12 passengers will soon come under MCA legislation too.

Examiners will be updated by a series of local seminars held in March. In the interim it is business as usual.

Examiner numbers have reduced slightly from 225 in 2004 to 217. 20 new examiners were trained in 2004. A new code of conduct clarifying examiner duties and controlling conflict of interests is in force. An independent appeal system is now available through the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators.

11,000 certificates were issued in 2004, matching the previous year. There are some 32,000 registered boats.

46 Field Assessments were carried out during real boat examinations, with the object of examiner consistency.

Checks can be summarised as 58% Construction points, 22% Condition and 22% Performance, giving 102% overall, which is outstanding!

23 written complaints were received, resulting in 3 examiners being removed and 4 formally cautioned. 3 complaints were discontinued and 12 are pending. 100 hours is spent on each complaint.

66 incidents or accidents were reported in 2004, an increase of 24 over 2003. 73% of these are on AINA membership waterways. 45 incidents involved fire or explosion, 24% of these resulting in serious injury or fatality. 11% involved lpg, and about 13% were due to arson.

BSS examiners reported 107 dangerous boats, a reduction of 110 over 2003, so the scheme is working.

The cost of the scheme was £370k in 2004. Earned income produced £160k, and BW and the EA contributed £105k each.

Amongst all the other administration, 5,200 telephone calls were answered, 6,400 emails responded to, 600 letters were replied to, and 8,600 monthly return forms processed.

In 2005 we can expect a comprehensive code for solid fuel stoves/venting after recent deaths from CO<sub>2</sub> poisoning. A flu spillage test is now required. Flame failure devices on hobs will be required.

Interesting points from the floor came from the boat insurer, Michael Stimpson, who pointed out that a reported majority of incidents involving residential/continuous cruising boats was due to their all the year round use compared with boats that spend most of their time moored up. This was refuted pro rata.

A lady who lives aboard a houseboat using mains gas had no idea where she stood with regard to BSS. This, amongst other things like planning issues and emergency services access is being looked into by the Residential Boat Issues Group.

Finally, John Redmond was thanked for all his good-humoured work for the BSS since its inception. He retires this year, and was promised a pint by Ian White, chair of AINA. In his reply John admitted that working with the BSS had been a hoot... a bundle of laughs! So that's official.

Enjoy your retirement John. Might we see you boating when not golfing?

\*Boat Safety Scheme  
Willow Grange  
Church Road  
WATFORD  
WD17 4QA  
01923 201278  
bss.office@boatsafetyscheme.com  
www.boatsafetyscheme.com

# WORRIED WOMAN of the WATERWAYS

Well here we are, a New Year and still I **worry**. Do I **worry** too much? Now let me make it quite clear, in the past I have been accused of **whinging** (Oxford dictionary - v. to complain persistently and peevishly) but **worrying** is not a bit like that. It can mean 'to feel troubled over actual or potential difficulties' and 'express anxiety' but it can mean 'annoy and disturb' or 'attack repeatedly'. This latter I do, and **will** continue to do.

"**Write** about the **wrongs** or you **won't** right the **wrongs**" is my motto.

**Water** levels are a worry to me, boating really can be an up and down existence seesawing between too much and stuck on the bottom. The canals can be bad, back pumping helps but sensible lock use does far more to reduce the problem. How many boaters nowadays bother to fill, or start to fill, the lock below before emptying the lock above on a flight of locks? If you don't, all the **water** goes down the **weir**, then you use the **water** in the pound, often a short one, to fill the lock. No **wonder** some get stuck in lock flights, they then have the cheek to blame **waterways**.

While on this subject let me appeal for boaters NOT to enter a pound on a lock flight when there is another boat going the same **way** also **waiting** for the next lock (unless you can get in it together). If you do, another lockful of **water** will have to go from the pound as you fill the lock below, and no - a boat coming up does not bring it with them! (as some **wally** once told me) Queuing in pounds **wastes water**, please just **wait** until you can start filling/emptying the next lock. You **won't** get anywhere faster whatever happens and certainly not if someone gets stuck on the bottom. Variation in **water levels** on the rivers is more extreme, though too much is usually the problem.

Will things on the waterways get better or worse?

Never say, in a resigned manner, 'Never mind it can't get any **worse!**' I fear that 'someone' is listening and takes that as a challenge.

Here is an example of **what I mean**. On the river Nene the locks usually have a guillotine gate at the lower end and mitre gates (called pointing doors) at the upstream end. Originally all of the guillotine gates were raised and lowered by turning a handle on a wheel, hard slow **work**, but it does get the job done. To 'improve' things the EA have electrified this operation on some of the locks.

The first ones they did, enabled the gate to raise completely straight away, thus sending tidal waves down the river. Never mind it can't get any **worse!**

The next one they did (**Wansford**), first the mechanism wasn't strong enough to lift the gate, and as the **winding gear** had been removed they had to get a crane in to lift it. Then the new mechanism was to lift the gate about four inches then hold for two minutes while the lock emptied at a suitable rate. However instead of then raising the gate fully, it then rose another four inches and stopped again and so on.

It is rumoured that there are boaters in East Anglia who arranged to collect their pensions while waiting to get through Wansford lock.

That was eventually sorted out. Never mind it can't get any **worse!**



'They' decided that guillotine gates are dangerous and should be replaced with 'pointing doors'. One Nene lock was 'improved' in this way. On the new bottom gates, the balance beams don't, making the gates incredibly difficult to move. It takes 198 very stiff **winds** to lift each paddle. Never mind it can't get any **worse!**

The remaining guillotine gates, not yet electrified, have now been fitted with a large alloy **wheel** for operation. No handle, just a large smooth **wheel** with a smooth metal rim, that you have to get a grip on, somehow, and turn, and turn, and turn, 212 turns on a huge **wheel** at some locks. Hell in the **wet, worse** in the cold and virtually impossible for anyone with a touch of arthritis.

Nobody dares to complain, they worry that things could get **worse!**

Have you been on the **Wigan flight** recently?

I was amazed to find that they were in a **worse** condition now than they **were** twelve years ago when I was last that **way**. I wonder what has happened to the money BW had to complete the backlog of maintenance? **Wasted** on office changes and fancy leaflets I'll **wager**.

Because I **worry**, I **write** to you about the **wrongs** I see about me on the **waterways**.

Do you let the powers-that-be know of any '**wrongs**' you experience? They rely on us to let them know.

If you do nothing, nothing gets done.

Your friend Dot.

---

MSO Advert

## N.W.A.F. – Not another body?



There are more than enough bodies littered about the waterways scene to make a classic murder mystery, so why do we need another one? There are associations for this, federations for that, even the odd council, all with the same aim – making the waterways better. However, what is 'better' for one may actually be worse for another. This is a problem faced by the one body that does have the power to improve the waterways, well, at least 2000 miles of them, and that is the Board of British Waterways.

Not surprisingly, Board members are chosen more for their business acumen rather than a working knowledge of life 'on the cut,' and so they need information from those who use, or hold a stake in, the waterways, in order to make informed decisions. What is missing is a way to condense the views of all the separate interest groups into a form that the Board can take into account when deciding on policy, and this is where the proposed *National Waterways Advisory Forum* (previously proposed as the NCC) comes in.

Even narrowing down the membership to waterway-interest organisations with national coverage, this forum could have over forty member bodies. The title 'Forum' was chosen as its role is not to make decisions, rather to identify common viewpoints and perhaps resolve differences by discussion before putting them to the Board. 'Advisory' was inserted to show that the Forum's status would carry more weight than just a talking shop or a consultative body which would only speak when spoken unto.

To take an example perhaps a little too down to earth for Board level policy but illustrative of the principle – the use of a fine ash type material to surface towpaths. It looks good on the path, and its costs might look good on the accountants' spreadsheets. However it does not look good when trodden into walkers' cars or boaters' carpets, nor does it taste good in anglers' sandwiches. It might feel good under cyclists' wheels but it is not so good when grinding away at their sprockets and chains. A complaint from one body here and another body there about this would command little respect, but if they all were to discover they shared a dislike of this surfacing technique and presented it as a joint case through the NWAFF, then BW would be obliged to take it into account.

Obviously it would be difficult to get the whole Forum and representatives of BW's Board together on a frequent basis, so this is envisaged to happen only once a year. In between, maybe quarterly, the Forum would send a delegation of perhaps eight of its members to exchange views with the Board. How this delegation is chosen to maintain a breadth of viewpoint is one of the challenges facing the temporary committee working on the framework for the NWAFF. British Waterways needs to strike a fine balance between ensuring the NWAFF succeeds and yet not being seen to have control over it. To this end an independent expert, Professor Jeffery Jowell, an eminent QC in the field of public and constitutional law, is chairman of this committee. Its sole purpose is to draft a constitution for the Forum to finalise and hopefully adopt at its first meeting, scheduled for April 2005. If Professor Jowell can write constitutions for Bosnians, there is at least a glimmer of hope he can succeed here, and certainly after the committee's first meeting, prospects are encouraging. SS

## NOTICES

**GOT A MIND FULL  
OF USELESS FACTS**

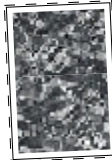
See the last readers'  
letter (page 29)

### POST FOR NABO NEWS

For issue 2/05 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)



### MEMBERS NEEDED, IDEAS NEEDED

Think of all those boaters out there who are missing out on the  
benefits of NABO, don't let them continue in ignorance.

NABO News now has a cover price, if you've done with it, leave it  
where another boater might find it and see it's worth something!

Don't sell your boat without a NABO information pack aboard.

Tell your mates Robin Evans is coming to the Q&A at our next  
AGM, but they can't challenge him unless they join!

Other ideas welcome...

**NABO 4 BETTER BOATING**

### YORKSHIRE REPRESENTATIVES

Come on, Tykes, there must be one of you  
prepared to do battle at User Group meetings.  
You might even get to meet our President.

Contact Carole Sampson

Also contact her if you plan to do the Severn  
from **Sharpness to Bristol** but can't do it with  
the NABO convoy. She may have some  
instructional videos to spare.

### 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



## CALLING ALL ANGLIAN REGION BOATERS

Do you cruise or live near the rivers controlled by the Environment Agency Anglian Region?

If so, you might like to consider giving some support to our Regional Secretary. The poor fellow has more rivers, navigable lengths and total number of structures to monitor than any other secretary and he cannot do it all by himself!

The EA has recently published its vision documents in the form of Waterway Plans for the Nene, Great Ouse, Welland, Glen, Ancholme and Stour navigations and if you have local knowledge or personal experience of any of these waterways you may care to pass your comments on the EA's plans (copies available from EA, ring 08708 506506) through our regional secretary. Better still, why not attend a local user group? Do you think the EA is right to place provision of new shower/toilet blocks ahead of lock gate improvements on the Nene? Have you experienced problems with operating the gates, paddles and guillotines? Some require a force that would challenge Popeye on a good day with a full charge of spinach!

EA have classified the state of its 'assets' in the Anglian Region as follows:-

- 1) 29% of assets were in 'Good' condition, (not requiring major capital investment for over 10 years).
- 2) 42% of assets were in 'Fair' condition (requiring capital investment within 10 years).
- 3) 6% of assets were in 'Poor' condition (requiring capital investment within 5 years).

Would you think this is a fair reflection?

What say you to EA's 'generic mooring design', constructed in steel in 5m sections with a timber or other non-slip decking and bollards at 4m centres?

Have you cruised the Old West River and thought that some additional dredging was needed? Or do you think that a new link between the Great Ouse Flood Relief channel and King's Lynn via the river Nar should be prioritised?

Do you approve of the plans for the proposed Fens Waterways Link which will link the Witham via the South Forty Foot Drain across to Peterborough and then on via improved sections of the Middle Level towards Cambridge?

Let Mike Smith (01733 891861) or our General Secretary know if you are able to give some tactical support to NABO members in the East. Ask not what NABO can do for you.

# THE BW BOATER'S DIRECTORY

What is the Boaters' Directory? BW says:-

*The Boaters' Directory will provide up-to-date, relevant, timely navigational information.*

*You have been asking us for a comprehensive directory of boating information covering all BW facilities and services and this is our response.*

*The main points are:*

- *the directory will be an electronic database on Waterscape.com - ensuring that it is easy for local offices to keep up to date and easy for boaters to search.*
- *we'll use the database to publish an annual hard copy available through BW customer services, Waterscape.com and selected outlets*
- *you will also be able to download and print your own copies from Waterscape covering just the areas of the network you need*
- *you will be able to choose the waterway(s) you wish to see. When viewed in PDF format or online, each facility will be marked, where practical, on a map.*

*Subjects included are:*

- *Access information (e.g. Which keys are required for particular structures or waterways)*
- *BW offices*
- *Canal dimensions*
- *Card and licence retailers*
- *Opening hours - manning arrangements and booking info for structures and waterways, including out-of-hours passage*
- *Safety information - advice and contact numbers for waterways and individual structures (e.g. freight movement, radio frequencies, operating quirks)*
- *Service/facilities blocks - facilities offered and any charges levied*
- *Slipways - maximum size, other information as required*
- *Tourist Information Centres*
- *Visitor Moorings - including information on length of stay (where known)*
- *Winding holes - size of boat*

*Outline timetable*

- *We plan to launch a London 'pilot' at the London Boat Show in January 2005*
- *Full coverage will be on Waterscape.com with 'print on demand' facilities available by 31 March 2005.*

# BSS Press Release



The modernisation of the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) will come into effect this April bringing various improvements including new-style requirements from the inland navigation authorities for installations and equipment on privately owned boats.

The Scheme is used by the navigation authorities to help prevent fires, explosions and pollution through a four-yearly mandatory boat examination that checks if the craft meets the requirements. Modernisation aims to make the Scheme more effective by balancing the regulatory, advisory and informative approaches. It will also provide a transparent alignment with other national and EU regulations. In effect this means the regulatory approach is strictly focussed on risks to third parties i.e. preventing fires starting and spreading, explosions and pollution:

- over 90 mainly construction specific standards are replaced by just 32 goal-setting requirements, although there will still be around 300 potential checks for examiners to complete
- new options for complying with the navigation authorities' requirements
- seven new compliance checks – although minor in nature and affecting a tiny number of boats
- a greater emphasis on advice and information to avoid pollution and to cover the use of fuels and systems
- alerting owners to their responsibilities linked to risks to first parties, such as more advisory checks for carbon monoxide, fire-escape and electrocution hazards.

A short 'key change' document is available setting out in simple terms the differences between the old Standards and the new requirements. However, the BSS expectations on the way installations and equipment will meet the requirements has changed little. As the document shows, most of the information contained within the BSS Essential Guide remains current.

In carrying out the checks, examiners have no discretion to accept arrangements that don't match the Scheme's expectations. However, boat owners who have documentary evidence to support a claim of compliance with the general requirements will be welcome to contact the BSS Office with all necessary details for consideration within a fast-track process.

As a part of modernisation, a second edition of the BSS Essential Guide is to be published. This will urge people to meet all industry accepted standards, to install equipment following suppliers' guidelines, to use only equipment designed for the rigours of the marine environment and to carry out routine checks and maintenance as complying with the requirements is binding at anytime the boat is in the water. It will be available on [www.boatsafetyscheme.com](http://www.boatsafetyscheme.com) free of charge or in various formats 'at cost' in the spring.

# COMEDIANS ON THE CUT

A number of personalities from the world of entertainment are well known for being owners of boats - actors David Suchet, Timothy West and his wife Prunella Scales are keen canal boaters with a more than casual interest in waterways and canal restoration. Other celebrities who have enjoyed their leisure time on their boats include actors Peter Davidson and Edward Woodward, Simon Le Bon, Jonathan and David Dimpleby, Sir Edward Heath, singer Vince Hill and Sir Elton John.

Show-business names from the past also feature in the list of famous boat owners: This year (2004) is the centenary of the birth of comedy actor George Formby who once owned a very smart Broads cruiser named "Lady Beryl" (after his wife). This was a 47 feet long cruiser built by Herbert Woods at Potter Heigham in 1938. She was equipped with twin 6-cylinder petrol engines, at a time when diesels were not the first choice for leisure craft.

She also had a magnificent double bed in the owner's cabin! When last seen in the late 1960's she had been re-named "Lady Luba" and was based on the River Avon at Tewkesbury.

The late Ernie Wise was also a boat owner and one of his ex-fleet is a Broom 30 motor cruiser appropriately named "Wisecrack" and currently based on the River Severn. Ernie also owned a number of other craft, mainly on the Thames and people who knew him speak fondly of him but say that he tended to neglect the condition of his vessels. Perhaps he was just too busy?

Still very much alive and kicking, Sir Norman Wisdom (God bless him) once owned a massive steel motor yacht named "Conquest". This vessel was classed +100A1 at Lloyds, which means she really was a luxurious craft. Built in Italy in 1966 she was some 94 feet long, equipped with twin General Motors 8-cylinder diesel engines and was registered in the port of London.

*Stephen Peters*

## **IWA NATIONAL CAMPAIGN CRUISE - BCN -28th to 29th MAY 2005**

IWA plan to have boaters gathering at the following five locations on the evening of 27th May: Gas Street (Birmingham), Salford Junction, Longwood Boat Club, Ryders Green (West Bromwich) and Wolverhampton. On Saturday 28th May those taking part will cruise along all the northern BCN canals, and will meet at a gathering at Walsall Town Wharf in the evening where entertainment and a barbeque will await.

Log books will be used to record the trip and any problems along the way, and to pass info to BW. (You could of course use NABO's Waterway reports Board, then others who might venture onto the northern BCN will get to see too.)

## **BEDTIME READING FROM BRITISH WATERWAYS WEBSITE**

Did you know you the Freedom of Information Act has given you access to many documents on BW's download pages?

They include:-

- Angling strategy
- Archaeology and Heritage Register
- Asset Inspection Procedures
- Annual Report and Accounts - Whole Document and component parts
- Board Minutes 29th Jan 2004 through 23rd Sept 2004
- BWML Mailing List
- BWML Protocol For Marina Business Appendix
- BWML Protocol For Marina Business
- Code of Conduct
- Code of Practice for Works Affecting BW
- Confidential Information Policy
- Disciplinary Rules
- Email and Internet Use Policy
- Emergency Procedures Manual
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Ethics
- Financial Memorandum England and Wales
- Financial Memorandum Scotland
- Freight Document - whole file and individual sections
- Heritage Register
- Intellectual Property
- Job Share Policy
- Mooring Protocol Report
- Mooring Guidance for Continuous Cruisers April 2004
- Covering letter for CC guidance April 2004
- Openness & Accountability Narrative Report: inc Appendix A
- Openness & Accountability Appendices B to E
- Openness & Accountability Mailing List
- Occupational Health Policy and Procedure
- Our Plan for the Future 2003-2007
- People Strategy
- Procurement Policy Statement
- Publication Scheme - Freedom of Information Act
- Safety Policy
- Sustainable Development
- Terms of reference - Audit Committee
- Terms of reference - Nomination Committee
- Terms of reference - Remuneration Committee
- Towpath Mowing Feedback Form (RTF document)



Towpath Mowing Guidelines  
Towpath Mowing Guidelines Letter  
Trial Moorings Code  
Waterways Code Leaflet  
Waterways For People  
Waterways for Wales - English  
Dyfrffyrdd I Cymru - Cymru  
Whistleblowing at Work  
Working with Children and Young People

All are in PDF format bar one, and can be downloaded from:-  
[www.britishwaterways.co.uk](http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk)

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# the mad professor

I suppose it would end up in my in-tray before long...

There I was, thinking it was about - well, I get confused - something to do with chicken with garlic butter? That's a Kiev isn't it? So what has it to do with picture galleries and Russian music - give me another vodka! - *Great Gates?*

Ah! Lock gates -, what a lot of nonsense about them! Some people should think about it more carefully before sounding off whether they should be left open or not. I've heard both camps saying there's a 50/50 chance of a lock being in your favour. Depends what you mean by 'in your favour'. If you mean that the level is right for you without you having to open a paddle or breaking your back against the gate beam to get it open, then, if you close the gates, it's not long before many locks are in nobody's favour, bearing in mind it is always that last inch or so that takes the time.

The level can be wrong for two reasons. One, both ends of the lock leak, so in the end the lock will end up half full, no good to man nor beast, or, two, the water you have brought with you going down, or taken when going up, has made the level in the pound wrong. Usually more of a problem in short pounds.

On the other hand I can see that it is damn annoying to arrive at a lock to go down and find you have to walk down and back both sides to close the bottom gates, especially if you're an old codger like me and you find crossing some top gates difficult when you have to walk across the beams. Even worse when the gates are hung to swing open, as David Lowe claims in his letter, and I quite believe him. But of course in that case you would find them open even if some conscientious souls have wasted their time trying to closing them.

Still, I'm not here to pontificate about what I might like or not like, I should be giving you a scientific dissertation, but I can't. The perfect standard lock is just as unreal as physics textbook's weightless strings and frictionless pulleys. Real locks are as diverse as the capabilities of the crews who operate them and to do a time-and-motion study for each case would make me very unpopular with the Editor. To really pin down whether it saves time and effort leaving the gates open you can't start till you know:-

Are you going up or down?

Is it a narrow or wide lock?

If the lock is wide and you are narrow, are you sharing?

Are the head gates double or single?

Are the tail gates double or single?

How many are in your crew and is anyone else there to help?

Can you cross at the lock tail?

Does the lock leak?

Do the gates swing open?

Can you get on or off with your boat in the tail of the lock?

Can you get on or off with your boat at the bottom of the chamber?

How much hassle are the landing stages?

Even if each question had only two answers that would make 2<sup>12</sup> case studies (which works out at 4096), so forget it!

So, it's down to social science really. Can you come to terms with leaving a lock with its gates open when you wouldn't dream of leaving your boat with its doors wide open?

Ask me why longer ships can go faster than short ones and how this relates to why the poor Southeast Asians had so little time to prepare themselves for the tsunami, I can tell you. But whether to leave lock gates open - no way!

The Railway & Canal Historical Society is hosting the 5th National Waterways Conference on Saturday 16 April 2005 in central Birmingham

The theme is to be European waterways including talks on historical sites (sights), the Moscow - St Petersburg waterway, Polish waterways, Belgian boat lifts, Dutch and German ditto, the Briare Canal in France (where else?).

The Chairman will be Tony Hirst and the cost will be £22 incl lunch.

More info from Stephen Peters (R&CHS member)

# FLY ON THE WALL



## at Council

A somewhat heavier Fly is back to report on the first Council meeting after Christmas.

Hope you all had a good one and your canals were open for you!

The sad news was given that NABO is losing members. This is not carelessness but mainly due to people giving up boating. How to get new members was discussed. If you have any ideas or think you could help do let a Council member know.

Another sort of news was somewhat disconcerting. There are apparently too many boats on the K&A and it is proposed that boats be booked on and off the canal to regulate the numbers. Rather like a big art exhibition! This is planned for 2 or 3 years time. This brings obvious implications for other canals and for the water supply.

British Waterways and NABO will have a joint initiative on Crime on the Cut. NABO will put a report form in the News and forward any reports to BW who will enter incidents of crime and intimidation on a database. You'll be able to check up on those dodgy spots before mooring and finding out the unpleasant way!

Council were spoilt for choice with many photos of mowing profiles! Which cut? How often? They thought perhaps the

easiest decision was what was NOT acceptable!

On a more serious note, quite a lot of time at the meeting was spent deciding on NABO's response to the Environment Agency's Transport and Works Order. NABO wants the new clause in the Order that EA must consult other parties before they apply it, or if they want to change how they apply it. EA suggests a forum to hear representatives' views. Council felt that another sentence was needed stating that EA would also take notice of these views!

If that were inserted NABO would be happy to sign the Memorandum of Understanding, but before NABO withdraws its objection to the Order the regulation on adjacent waters must exclude waters under the control of other navigational authorities.

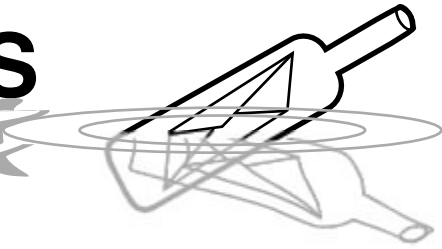
Now, see if you can spot me in the next Waterfront. The chairman got Andrew the publican to take a picture of Council for a feature on NABO - just so the vain so-and-so could be in it himself. Look carefully at the walls for me, but remember I'm only a fly.

It was out into the West Midlands snow after that! Here's hoping for a milder time in March

Byeeeee



# LETTERS



The G.U. of old

I enjoyed the article 'Memories of the Grand Union' by Tony Haynes and wondered if he would like a few comments?

These recollections are valuable as a record of what is now becoming history and some of Tony's observations are new to me. He is recording pre 1961 (when I think the wood pulp finished) - certainly pre 1963 as after that year BW south east division only operated three pairs of narrow boats on the Lime juice run, (Brentford to Boxmoor), plus one pair on the cement run (Long Itchington to Birmingham), although the NW division continued to run its the southern fleet based at Anderton. Most of the BW GU contracts, boats and crews, apart from the lime juice and the cement, were taken over by Willow Wren CTS Ltd. who also took over the NW narrow boat fleet the following year.

As Tony says, the boats were painted blue and yellow which looked smart when new but did fade somewhat if not repainted regularly. The transfers (by Frank Jones) were excellent, but not the real thing, and again tended to look a bit tatty after a while. Some boatmen did add their own 'real' painting of course, and some of the BW boats were just as smart as the Willow Wrens, Barlows and other independents as the many

published photographs taken at the time will testify.

Tony's statement about the number of single motors is a surprise; BW only had to my knowledge one regular single motor in the SW fleet, this ('Barnet') was operated by Wilf Townsend, a well known character, who had 'his own means' and is mentioned in John Thorpe's book 'Windlass in My Belt'. It would be interesting to know the names of the other motors operating singly. Likewise the term 'Monkey boat' was used on the Thames, and by some people 'on the bank' but never, to my knowledge, by the boatmen. It possibly originated from Thomas Monk who was supposed to have designed the narrow boat cabin - if my recollection is correct!

Tony refers to opening top gates with a rope from the boat with a slip knot. I had often wondered about this, but as the locks were almost always set ahead of the boats by the lockwheeler this was generally not necessary and I never heard, before, of this practice. The term is 'thumblining' and it was normal practice to open GU and other similar wide locks' bottom gates this way. A line from the motor's mast (and sometimes the butty's) is taken round the mitre end of the handrail (often

curved here for this reason?), then round the hand rail a couple of turns and jammed up against the middle upright stanchion. As the boat goes astern the line goes tight and wedges the knot (which isn't a knot at all but a 'jammed hitch') against the stanchion. The leverage causes the gate(s) to open when a level is reached. Most bottom lock gates were designed, by the way they were hung, to open easily, automatically even, on most canals, (and some still do) so the gate opens easily and swings back of its own accord. The motor goes out, the line unravels and drops down, hopefully on to the cloths or the cargo, if not trailing in the water. It is poetry to watch when done properly, and of course highly efficient. (See picture in January 'Waterways World' p61).

As Tony observes paddles were dropped (most ground paddles were designed to be dropped - note how the paddle generally stops just before it reaches the bottom, then drops the last inch or so to avoid damage). Gate paddles would be run down using the hand as friction to avoid damage, by the considerate boater. Paddles were always left UP and gates open, on exit, unless another boat were following when again a considerate boatman might make the lock ready, or 'turn it round' though generally the lock wheeler from the following pair will have arrived by then.

I have never seen boatmen using the paddles only to close gates on a wide GU lock - generally the gates need a bit of moving first; this could be achieved on the motor's side (and in a narrow lock) by directing a stream of water behind

the gate(s) using throttle and rudder. I have seen gates shut on the Aire & Calder and S&SYN using the paddles only, before mechanisation of course, and I believe some BCN locks were designed with a water entry behind the bottom lock gate so that when the top paddle is opened the water shuts the bottom gate.

In commercial days there was a huge amount of 'semi-automation' on both small and large waterways to save time and, just as importantly, effort. Dumb Barges and Compartment boats were flushed into and out of locks by opening the paddles (aka 'types' oop north) on the South Yorkshire, and A&CN for example, while single handed boatmen on the L&L opened and closed swing bridges using ropes and so on.

David Lowe

## Balls, Laundry

In response to your query in latest NABO news: have tried it at home and was unimpressed. May be eco-friendly but:

- only got 25 washes from it. Maybe due to using it in a fully automatic washer, so can't avoid rinse cycles unless you sit over the machine. Instructions suggest you can skip the rinse.

- on that basis, very expensive (£8 for 25 washes) versus £4.50 for same number using conventional powder

- noisy, as the plastic ball rattles around the drum

On the plus side, did seem to wash OK

Dave Martin

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## and more . .

In the last issue of Nabo News, Carole and yourself mentioned items from Lakeland. Another item I have found very useful that they sell is the Sink Strainer item 7729 pack of 2 for £2.95. These don't have holes like most sink strainers but a heavy wire mesh. These work very well in bath and shower drains, stopping the hair and scum that normally blocks up the pump filter and they can be easily cleaned after the show tray/ bath is empty.

Brian Harnser

## Rafting up

I retired in January 2001 and purchased a narrowboat in May of that year, joining both NABO and IWA at the same time. This was the first time for 15 years I had been on a narrowboat and was, therefore, naturally a little apprehensive about cruising, particularly on my own boat, as opposed to hiring.

I need not have worried. In that first year, when I must have made silly mistakes, everyone my wife and I met were helpful and friendly and very happy to give me tips as to the customs and practices of the cut. When requested I was happy to let other boats raft up to me, even cruisers, and found others equally willing to let me raft up to them (I thought it was breast up, by the way).

Until last year that is. At Little Venice, where the signs specifically state that rafting up is permitted, a narrowboat owner\* took grave exception to my attempt to raft up and stated "I don't like it" when I pointed out the BW sign.

"I know that is what it says but I don't like it". Rather than start a row I breast up to another boat, who was also reluctant but desisted when I pointed out the signs. I tried to report to the mooring warden, Tim, but he was not aboard and the BW towpath office had closed! In four years of cruising since retirement, for 6 months at a time, this is the first anti-social behaviour by other boaters I have experienced. I think, and hope its a rarity, as otherwise our canal life has been marvellous. Both BW and EA staff have been courteous and helpful and the NABO News very informative. I have just used the web site you mentioned to fax my MEP regarding red diesel. More strength to your arm.

David Kennedy  
nb Liberty Bell

\*David did name the boat, but I didn't think it fair to publish it. However the issue of naming boats did remind me of the incident where a boat called Dragonfly was reported to BW for overstaying on 48-hour moorings on the Caldon, and a reply came back that the office would contact the owners. What they were not told was that said vessel was a BW work flat! Ed.

## and more . .

Your last letter's page refers.

I read Chris Boxall's letter with horror. Does he honestly think any member of NABO would be so paranoid or selfish or both as to refuse anyone the facility of rafting up where moorings were scarce?

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Your good lady, went on about something that pre-supposed that we are all au fait with 'brass cleaning'. Is this some ancient Saxon or Druid ritual that has passed me by?

Ron Bingham asks a question about stainless steel. I would hate to think what a mild steel top on a sanitary station hopper would look like after a season's good use. I suspect he would be the first in the queue to fit a pumpout system on his boat.

Finally, anything that presumes to wash clean eighty machine loads of washing without delivering any noxious effluent sounds as good as a safe investment opportunity with a 125% annual return. Something for nothing never works! I bet some bloke arrives just after your first wash with a packet of DAZ!

Louis Jankel

### **A challenge for NABO?**

I've been a member of NABO for a number of years and I find it a very useful source on information as to what's going on in the canal world at large. I have a narrow boat (Pegary) that I hire out so I'm always interested

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in things such as diesel prices that might affect my business.

But that's only by way of introduction, and not the main reason for this email. One of my other passions in life is quizzing, and I have appeared on many TV and radio shows including Mastermind, Brain of Britain, and most recently Eggheads. About the only thing I haven't been on in fact is University Challenge and as my student days were some 30 years ago I thought my only chance to do so would be to apply for the Open University first (as someone did a few years ago solely to get on the show). Then, with the advent of the Professionals Series of UC it suddenly struck me the other day that there maybe other like-minded individuals in NABO.

Do you think there might be three other NABO members who might like to get together to put up a team? We may well be too late for the next series but it will probably be a regular feature, and would be a good source of publicity for NABO if we succeeded in getting on.

Paul Overall

*Advert*

## Continuous Cruising

Can I add a word or two in support of Les Weatheritt (Letters, August 2004).

We also have a Continuous Cruising licence and have no permanent mooring - to go to, or to pay for. That just happened to be the situation when we bought our 55ft narrowboat five years ago, and it suited our circumstances, needs and interests at the time. In those days (5 whole years ago!) nobody commented. Not even BW. Indeed, at the time we thought that was the norm; we met lots of other boaters who seemed to be the same.

What a change from now. All of a sudden we continuous cruisers seem to be the new pariahs of the waterways, ducking our heads from the flak and trying not to be noticed among the barrage of criticism for 'boating on the cheap'.

If only... As pensioners we are all too aware that there is no such thing as boating on the cheap these days. We can afford it because we make big sacrifices in other directions in order to continue to afford it. And because we are plain bloody-minded in response to all efforts to price us out of it.

We own a boat because we love the canals. We love exploring this beautiful country we live in. We are always curious about what is round the next bend. We love the heritage of the industrial age (now sadly disappearing faster than we can get to see much of it), and we love the peace of the rural waters and the wildlife that inhabits them. We love the

constant change of scene from the windows of our (truly) mobile home.

We didn't buy a boat as a tax-break investment or as a means of flaunting our new-found wealth to our envious friends. Ours is undoubtedly a luxury even though it is not luxurious. Unlike Les, we do not live aboard. We are like those envious friends of his and would like to take a year or three to do just that, and would feel absolutely no shame about doing it. As it happens, we have family commitments which necessitate keeping a solid base on the land more sacrifices - to permit us to maintain this attractive lifestyle. Nothing really good comes easily, it seems.

As for a permanent mooring, that would limit our cruising range from that constant starting point; not what we wanted when we bought the boat, and definitely not what we want now. Even in the winter we enjoy movement. Only ice and BW stoppages actually stop us completely.

As for speed of movement, the only records we break are those for length of time between locations. We have covered twenty miles in a day's cruising, and we have covered barely one mile in a whole week's cruising. We prefer isolated moorings for which there is no competition, and religiously observe limits on the few designated visitor moorings we do use. Not that we crawl when on the move: we observe breaking wake restrictions-and moored boats (not like many of the gleaming marina ornaments that pass us), but otherwise



move at normal pace so as to avoid impeding the progress of others.

We are very glad, nevertheless, that we no longer have to prove we've moved so many lock miles in the last fortnight.

That was just too daft. Officialdom demonstrating how to be officious.

Whatever happened to that camaraderie of the waterways which embraced everyone who took to them, whatever their circumstances and however humble their craft? Is this the new heritage of the 21st century, that the canals are now what the Thames was a few decades ago?

Sorry, guys - you compete among yourselves and leave us out of it. We don't want to show off, just cruise. We'll do it tidily, but not ostentatiously. That's not our style. Just ignore us while we enjoy ourselves our way. Please...?

Tony & Brenda Ilett

**and more. . .**

Congratulations on inclusion in BW Consultative Council.

(this wishful thinking was addressed to me as chairman - I am only on the inauguration committee as yet - Ed.)

Although you may have had a small turnout for the AGM there must be lots of people like myself who would like to attend, indeed would like to play a more active part, but are restricted by lack of time and money

Myself, I am a long term liveaboard, strongly supportive of NABO, politically opinionated, informed, intelligent and argumentative, but without the time or money to travel to NABO meetings.

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So, to the purpose of this letter.

Don't forget that a lot of liveaboards are broke. Many live on their boats because there's no way they could afford a house, And a car? You must be joking!!

Such people support NABO's opinions, strength and lobbying.

There's lots of them, but you won't see them, they can't even afford the train fare here to Birmingham, let alone a mooring.

Bear us in mind when you formulate convictions, and when you negotiate on behalf of boaters.

Don May

**In reply . . .**

Thanks for your support. We have had members leaving because 'NABO is only interested in liveaboards', and now the likes of Don here thinks we are forgetting them.

It is like tightrope-walking to balance the opinions of all the different boating groups, and sometimes the only thing we have to steady us is the Law of the Land. We are even asked to change that at times but it is not an easy job.

Only when we get chastised by both sides do we know we are getting it least wrong!

Stuart Sampson, Chairman

P.S. Don't forget the Residential Boat Owners Association does specifically deal with the concerns of those living aboard:

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WD3 1WJ

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