

**INLAND NAVIGATION ISSUES, NEWS, AND VIEWS**

**NABO**



**NEWS**

- **British Waterways to change**
- **Cost of Boating Survey Results**
- **Don't Get Upset**



**Issue 4 – June 2009**

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## 2009 CALENDAR

<b>Council meeting*</b>	<b>NN Copy date</b>
<b>11th July</b>	<b>18th July</b>
<b>5th Sep</b>	<b>10th Oct</b>
<b>21st Nov</b>	<b>AGM</b>
<b>28th Nov</b>	<b>5th Dec</b>

*\*Members are entitled to go to these meetings.  
Please arrange with Chairman or Gen. Sec.*

# BRITISH WATERWAYS TO CHANGE



You must have been really getting away from it all on your boat if you haven't heard that BW has a new strategy. This starts this autumn with a return to smaller 'Waterway Units' rather than the eight 'Business Units', each with responsibility just for looking after the 'track' in its area and those who use it. The 'business' aspects are being centralised again and the intention is that a layer of management can be removed and up to £10 Million a year saved, going some way to offset the £30 Million a year shortfall that threatens our waterways with decline.

In the longer term, dubbed the 'Twenty/Twenty Vision' by BW, it is hoped that BW can become a 'National Trust' for the waterways, neither a public body as it is now, nor sold off to the private sector. This '3rd sector' future was advocated in the review conducted by KPMG and might involve the main body of BW as we know it becoming a Community Interest Company, a fairly recent invention of Government but as yet not applied to an organisation as big as BW.

In the booklet BW has prepared for its own staff, it explains:-

BW in England and Wales has been given three priorities by Defra:

- to maintain the waterway network in a satisfactory order
- to achieve the shared government/BW longer term vision of moving towards greater self-sufficiency
- to deliver a range of additional public benefits

This strategic 'steer' fits well with our mission to have a thriving, sustainable waterway network which is cherished by a public that shares a deep sense of responsibility for its wellbeing...

Many organisations have shown how public participation can add to their stability, both financially and practically. BW wants to encourage a much closer relationship with the public, not simply as a taxpayer or user of the waterways but as supporter and volunteer...

The best way to do this is to have the goal of changing the ownership structure of BW so that it goes beyond central government, brings a sense of belonging and responsibility to communities and individuals, and eventually moves into the third sector...

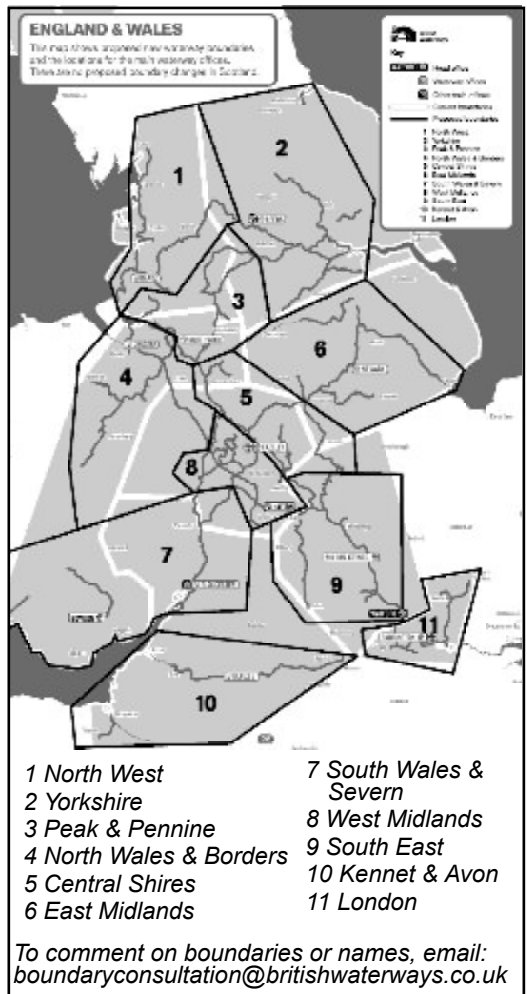
So, to deliver more public benefit, move towards self-sufficiency and ultimately the third sector, BW must maintain and improve the waterway network. The proposal is to move from eight business units to 11 smaller, more manageable waterway units. This will allow more hands-on, local management delivering inspection, maintenance and day-to-day customer service for the benefit of our visitors and customers...

We propose to have fewer layers of management. The benefits of pooling talent within BW have been proved with the success of the shared services centre set up in 2004, the New Marinas Unit in 2006 and, most recently, the national property business.

From the boaters' point of view, one of the businesses to be centralised will be BW managed moorings, so the setting of fees will no longer be under local control and perhaps a bit more consistent over the network.

Overall, the changes don't affect BW staff on the bank, but in the 'office' level of BW, about 1000 staff will be re-applying for 900 jobs. It would be nice to think that 'users' could take some part in the selection for key roles, but it seems that BW isn't yet prepared for this level of outside involvement.

Generally there is already a feeling that office staff are understandably a bit 'distracted'. The first individual 'casualty' seems to be the External Relations Manager, Jonathan Bryant, who has disappeared without trace. Jonathan was involved in most of the national 'user group' meetings including WUSIG, BWAf and the Customer Service Standards panel. Boaters will have heard his name in connection with the forthcoming 'road shows' and as the contact for second level complaints in the Internal Complaints Procedure. We don't suppose he will get to read this but we wish him well, he was a real gentleman.



East Midlands General Manager, Caroline Killeavy, is now in this role. She says:-  
*'Officially I am working between Watford and Newark so people can use either postal address and post will reach me.*

*However in terms of second level complaints I think we should stick with the Watford address for consistency. I have included the general enquiries email address on Waterscape. The procedure is still the same and customers should read the guidance on Waterscape to ensure they direct their complaint to the most appropriate person in the first instance. Link below.....*

**<http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/listening-to-you/if-you-have-a-complaint>**

*Thanks for communicating to your members.'*

NABO hopes that constructive dialogue won't be unduly disturbed by the re-organisation and that the new BW will be more focussed and accountable and will use the money it saves wisely.

## BW'S PROPOSED NEW HQ STRUCTURE

Robin Evans, Chief executive

Steve Dunlop Director Scotland	Operations, Finance, Legal & corporate affairs, Property & regeneration, Marketing & communications
Jim Stirling Technical director	Engineering, Asset management, <b><i>Project management, Water &amp; environment, Heritage</i></b>
Mark Bensted Regeneration director	Regeneration, Economic development, <b><i>Strategic planning</i></b> , Freight
Stuart Mills Property director	Property development, <b><i>Estates, Strategic planning</i></b> , Utilities
Vince Moran Operations director	Operations, Workshops, <b><i>Safety</i></b> (including BSS%), Workboats
Simon Salem Marketing director	Communications, Marketing, Customer relations, Boating business, <b><i>Enforcement, Moorings, Volunteering, Angling</i></b>
Philip Ridal Finance director	Financial control, Tax & <b><i>accounting</i></b> , ICT, Shared service centre, BWML, GIS
Nigel Johnson Corporate Services director	Legal, Audit, Human Resources

Items in ***bold italics*** are where responsibilities are to be taken over centrally from the Business Units. BW doesn't expect staff to have to relocate physically to Watford to achieve this but is putting faith in technologies such as email and video conferencing to reduce travel and disruption to employees' personal lives.



Don't let them kid you that all Visitor Moorings are less than 14 day duration. Here is a sign for a 14D mooring at Beeston.

# CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



## Is money the root of all evil?

You will see the data from John Slee's cost survey elsewhere in this edition. It makes interesting reading, and hopefully will help guide you on what others are paying. The real value comes in future years, when we can better track cost increases over time. As a spin off from the survey, we can see the age profile of our membership which is definitely towards the more mature end of the scale. A member highlighted this for me recently when he pointed out that BW take a big portion of the married State pension increase of £250 with their increases in licence and mooring fees. And if your mooring was in an auction, the story could be worse again. When you add a bit of red diesel tax, it's all gone. We have long felt that DEFRA and BW are pricing the oldies off the canals and that is just plain unfair.

The number of licences has gone up by 1000 every year for some time. We shall see if this is still the case in the current climate. The indications to users are that the system is reaching a 'limit' on its capacity to accommodate any more boats. It is true that BW have encouraged marina developments but this has left them beholden to the commercial operators and as a result are restricting the existing line side moorings and driving of prices though blatantly unfair auction practices. BW want the up side of the revenue for new boats to cover today's costs and meet targets, but none of the downside and responsibility of how the residential and itinerant boaters are to be accommodated. Do BW check that new registrations have a mooring or any prospect of continuous cruising before they take the cash? Not a bit of it, as the trade would be up in arms. And I see we have office accommodation

boats in Paddington. Is this good use of our canal space? Much better to have a few more 48 hour moorings so that more of us can venture there with confidence, but the money speaks louder.

BW is consulting over changes to the arrangements for using the Limehouse lock. These include a proposed charge for a call out for use of the lock out of normal hours. For most of us this has little or no impact. Few venture out this way and even less do it out of hours. So why not make a charge for those who do? Not unreasonable you might think, after all, the Anderton Lift attracts a booking charge. But NABO has held the view for a long time that there is a principle of payment for the licence which covers all navigation costs. If we see BW charging for minor usage items like this, where does it end? Will we see a return to the days of stop locks and gauging as the DEFRA cuts bite deeper? Or a situation where BW feel that they can prevent navigation if they so choose as they did in the 50's? It is right that BW manages manpower costs and cuts out wastage, but that should not be at the price of a loss of navigation. They have a duty to perform.

Whilst cruising recently I saw the new grass cutting contractor Fountain at work, first on Hatton and then on the Coventry. They were well equipped on both sites with mini tractors and wide grass cutters and were covering some ground in what looked a very efficient manner. I think that this is their first full growing season so we should see the effect of what they are doing. We were in a lock at Hatton when the trimmers arrived, but they found

lock so we were not covered in grass cuttings and dust. A good way to please a boat owner. Then coming south down the Coventry through Tamworth the place was so tidy I thought that the local council must have been helping out. But eventually we caught up with the Fountains team working away in a flood of grass cuttings. They were working systematically and for the most part cutting to the edge. It would be very boring if all the banks were this tidy, but I won't worry too much about that just now.

Fountains are not a small company, and it is reported that their contract will reduce costs for the Waterways and that is to all our benefit. I looked on their web site, and I see that their

Managing Director is paid a good deal more than Robin Evans. There is some irony in the gardener getting more than the land manager but I have no problem with that if he is running a tight organisation, saving us money and giving a good service. But we should not forget that Robin and his team are well paid too. In their case they are not winning any funds from DEFRA and the local authorities at the moment. For what they get paid they need to do better and stop bullying the soft target of boaters. Many of the oldies contributed to the survival of the canals as we know them. Are they now to be priced off the cut?

Good boating this summer

## RELIEVING THE STRAIN

### *Two tips to easier boating*

#### **Pulling Pins**

Don't bend down to pull a mooring stake out. Take a length of rope – could be the mooring line if there is enough length to spare – and pass it through the loop on the stake so that you can stand with one end in one hand, the rope going down through the loop and back to your other hand. Bend your knees slightly, take up the rope slack with your hands and pull by straightening your legs and/or leaning back with your back straight. Less work for physiotherapists too!

#### **Pushing off - the Rule of Thirds**

You see many people, particularly in narrowboats, leaving a mooring by pushing off at the bows. Wrong! For every two feet you push the bows out, the stern wants to come in a foot, and, if the bank is in the way, that's a third of your effort wasted, possibly grounding the stern if it is shallow.

Much better to walk back about a third of the length of the boat and push there. For every two feet you can push off there the bows will come out three and the stern won't move at all, so you can walk to the back and get aboard there while the boat is swinging out.

Where you push is the true pivot point of the boat when steering using the rudder, and the point a horseboat would have its towing mast, so that its steerer can keep it in mid channel with a centred helm and just a modicum of angle to the bank to offset the sideways tension in the tow.

The theory also applies to kites, and cricket bats! In this case the point is called the centre of percussion, or 'sweet spot', where you don't feel the impact with the ball through the handle!

## IF ONLY WE KNEW?

### *Stuart tries to improve stoppage notification*

If you are one of those boaters who just goes off for summer weekends or short trips, having to change your plans probably doesn't matter. The whole essence of boating is to come and go when the mood takes you, and if you can't go where you want to and have to turn back or go another way, who cares?

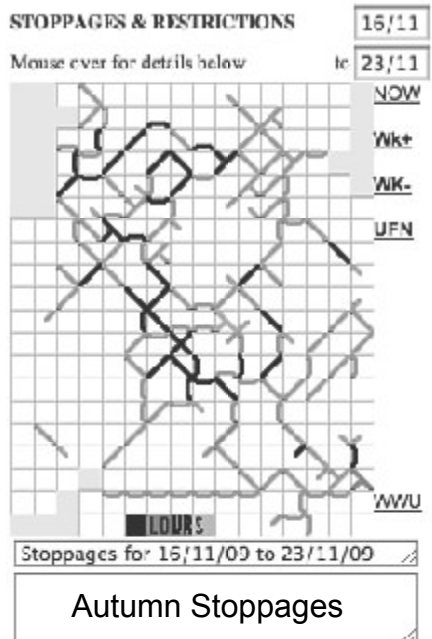
Not all boaters have such freedom. Promises, appointments and deadlines can't be avoided just because you are water borne, and a route that is impassible can foul things up good and proper.

After the Spring User meetings, BW gauges local feeling and creates a draft winter programme. This is assessed at a National Stoppage Meeting at which NABO presses home the point that boating goes on all year and endeavours to persuade BW to shift some timings to allow longer routes to be open and the minimum number of boaters would get trapped. This year, as with last year, NABO was not invited and heard about it too soon before the meeting to find an attendee. Apologies from BW - heart-felt?

However I did insist on receiving the draft spreadsheet and worked hard to enter the information into the trial 'at-a-glance' display I was working on so those who could go could see how the network might look. This display is being developed on the NABO website but is not available to the public. Like all stoppage notifications this also has to rely on the Internet but the plan is to make it available to those with small screens as well as big ones in case you are the proud possessor of something like an i-Phone.

We have got as far as creating a thumbnail map of the network with closed routes marked in red (Black on the illustration) and restrictions in yellow. Open waterways are left blue so at a glance you can see if a route is open now or expected to be at a future date you select. Technically it works, but like all such projects the crux is whether it can be kept up to date and by whom.

BW don't promise to have any spare effort. They have cut office staff to the minimum to ensure no reduction in bankside staff, but that doesn't necessarily mean services to boaters won't suffer. Stoppage notifications are sent to those who enlisted with Waterscape and that should continue, but translating the flood of emails into something meaningful can be a challenge. Would you know if the failure of Lock 57 on the Grand Union will affect your cruise round the 'Leicester Ring'?

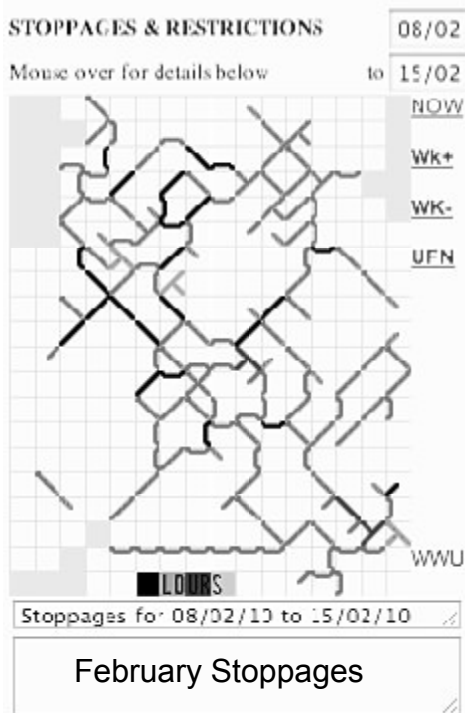




Tony Haynes already does his best to place such information on the NABO Waterway Reports Forum, but that is no substitute for a visual display in map form. We are trying to get Waterscape to take it on but it might end up being one of the first ways in which volunteers can actually do something to help waterway users that BW can't commit itself to, in the offices where labour is going to become increasingly scarce.

To show its potential we have two maps showing roughly how the network is affected by winter works before and after Christmas. However what is needed is a regularly updated display to show emergency closures and, ideally, river conditions too. It takes minutes to enter the data - anybody prepared to commit themselves?

Help and support for this project would be most welcome.



## DELIVERY STATUS NOTIFICATION (FAILURE)

### E-BULLETINS

Sorry to keep having to remind members but people still don't understand how it works.

If you want to receive bulletins from NABO then go to

**[www.nabo.org.uk/bulletin.html](http://www.nabo.org.uk/bulletin.html)**

and follow the instructions for opting your e-mail address into the list.

We would also ask you to unsubscribe any defunct addresses so we don't get delivery failure bounces every time we issue a bulletin.

There are so many of these now we are tempted to clear the whole list and ask you all to re-apply.

The system has no connection with the membership database, so please tell our membership administrator separately if you want the e-mail address she has for you to be updated.

DELIVERY IMPOSSIBLE

SORRY

RECIPIENT NOT RECOGNISED

FAILED MAILBOX FULL

## CARING FOR BW'S ASSETS

### *David Fletcher is impressed*

BW recently presented the way in which they manage the condition of the major assets to a meeting of user and trade representatives.

They have listed all the major items on the system, items like locks, bridges, culverts, weirs, embankments and so on totalling 10,600 items. The condition of these is graded in a formal inspection and categorised A to E, A being 'Very Good' and E being 'Bad'. In addition they are categorised for the risk involved should they fail, 1 though 5 with 5 being the most serious. So each item has a code of say C5, B3 etc.

A combination of E and 5 would imply an item in bad condition, and with a serious consequence. BW does not allow E5, and if they occur, they are an immediate safety priority. This might mean immediate repair, or it may be a stoppage or removal from service.

The current percentage distribution assets in the letters are as follows:

A 3.6% B 22% C 53.4% D 17.8% E 3.3%

In the current list there are 22 E4s, and 44 E3s and these are clearly a priority for planning maintenance work. We have the full list and this is on the member's area of the web site.

BW said that they could not pretend that the assets were in good condition. They were surviving doing what they could within budgets and this was sustainable only in the short term. The backlog in repairs would overtake them at some point in the future. BW said that there was a "principle" inspection routine of 5 or 10 years. Also when items are in the E category, inspections are double checked and then were monitored monthly for deterioration. Regular reports on the asset conditions are made to the management team and to the Board.

On dredging, BW said that there is a team continuously surveying the system, and they will shortly announce that data is a maximum of 8 years old. They are now using sonar scanning from moving boats, but some of the older data is based on localised pole soundings. The sonar data gives a full profile of the canal and the data can be electronically checked to determine the draft available for an example craft. These new tools are giving good data, and are used in decision making on dredging. BW said that they were still greatly influenced by customers, both for reality check calibration of the sonar data and for planning spot and campaign dredging. So they invited complaints about dredging! Send them in.

BW are thinking about and over-viewing measurements for the "condition of the canals". DEFRA is asking for a measure of this, and there is a need for some meaningful basis to wrap up the mass of data, and set this against the £30m cash deficit. They showed comparative data for locks, tow paths, etc to indicate which regions are doing better, and highlighted the need for moving of the expenditure between different areas. They said that this was one of the reasons for considering nationalising the control of the decision making on these issues, so that regions did not just do their own thing.

Overall I was impressed with the level of detail, and methodology. The matter of fact presentation of the condition of the assets was refreshingly open and the logic of trying to target the money that they have in the right place, is good. A lot falls on the shoulders of the inspection teams to assess the condition of the assets and categorise the risks. We should support them on the canal bank whenever we see them. When they get back to the office they will often be the carriers of bad news.

## **WUSIG UPDATES**

### ***Howard Anguish on latest developments***

In the last issue of NABO News, I reported on the spring 2009 Waterway User and Special Interest Group meeting and two items in particular are of concern for many boaters – the issue of cycling on towpaths, and also the pre-consultation draft of a document being prepared by British Waterways prior to circulation to the wider boating community in early summer.

#### **Cycling issues**

The latest news is that, as previously reported, a sub-group of WUSIG members are going to meet in early September to discuss in depth the suggestions put forward by cycling groups. A number of NABO members have advised me of their concern about conflicts between cyclists and other towpath users and these will, of course, be included in the deliberations of the sub group. Any other submissions for this first meeting will be welcomed – please e-mail me with your input. The sub-group will be reporting their conclusions and suggestions at the next WUSIG meeting in early October.

#### **Online Mooring Policy Consultation**

You may have gathered that at the Spring WUSIG, members felt frustrated that because of the time taken by the cycling paper, not sufficient time had been given to the draft Mooring Policy Consultation document. As a result, BW decided to invite interested parties to a meeting in London to discuss in more depth its draft document which covers many aspects of mooring use in the increasingly congested inland waters. NABO was represented by Geoffrey Rogerson and myself; other delegates were from the AWCC, IWA, RBOA and HNBOC, so a whole range of inland waterway users groups was represented.

The original draft document concerns such issues as visitor mooring provision, congestion at “honey-pot” sites, overstaying, mooring densities at on-line moorings, and non-compliant continuous cruisers. We also asked to consider a parallel draft document from BW which specifically addresses the provision of berths for residential use, planning issues etc., together with the unauthorised use of leisure moorings. I think it is fair to say that the two documents were thoroughly analysed and BW have also received a considerable detailed suggestions from other WUSIG members.

The next stage will be that BW will re-write the draft document which will be issued for consultation to all interested parties – user groups and individuals - in the next few weeks. Please have a look at it when issued and let NABO Council have your comments, suggestions and criticisms so that we can truly represent you when the issue is debated in the latter part of the year.

I should really avoid the main issues and talk about something else, but having been chairman over the previous five years, I can't just ignore the new ethos for British Waterways.

When I became chairman, Robin Evans was a somewhat unknown quantity and the dust was settling after the previous re-organisation. I was looking at it from the practical angle that quite often keeps my feet on the ground when these high level events are going on, namely what would the members need to know and how best to present it. This was the advantage of being NABO News editor/graphic/web designer and prevented me from getting too detached in my new role as chairman. I needed to draw maps of the new Business Units for the Waterway Reports Forum, mark the boundaries on the Regional Secretaries map at the back of the magazine and try to get 'who's who' lists out of BW for the new Council Handbook.

It just so happened that, around that time, we were moored in the Manchester Castlefields area and we took in a User Group Meeting at the pub by the bottom lock of the 'Rochdale 9'. We were in conversation with one Adrian Sains, manager thereabouts, who said that Robin Evans had decreed that the Business Unit boundaries should be 'seamless', otherwise the manager of any Unit which was out of line would be fired. Cruising on down the Trent and Mersey we noticed a sharp divide in the height of towpath vegetation either side of the Wedgwood Visitor Moorings and, Lo and Behold, thus was the boundary between the new Wales & Border Counties, and West Midlands units! Seamless – my foot!

The word 'seamless' gradually fell out of common usage and now we have a situation that in '20/20 Hindsight' would have been an inevitable consequence of the Chief Executive's grand new scheme, namely inconsistency and duplication of effort. I have been bemoaning the lack of communication between HQ and the Units all along, particularly regarding the different approaches to local User Group Meetings, and at these, it fell to NABO reps to tell one Unit what another was doing. It was becoming increasingly difficult for things discussed at Boating Issues (later WUSIG) meetings to get through to be 'delivered' at Unit level as the units tended to ignore HQ and do their own thing, despite the best efforts of the likes of Eugene Baston.

So Robin Evans is doing a U-turn.

A 'tier of management' is being removed. Will this cause a mining subsidence or have they got enough pit props to prevent the top layers of management dropping down and their pay with it? That would be an even more worthwhile saving but would turkeys vote for Christmas?

Looking to the future, or 'going forward' as current management speak would have it, the idea of waterway units dealing only with local waterway matters might just simplify channels of communication and give Headquarters some of its authority back. Things like setting mooring fees would be centralised and hopefully be more consistent, with the people who write the 'guidelines' being the ones to apply them. I am still slightly bemused by the difference between 'Customer Services' and 'Customer Operations' but time will tell – going forward!

I am still not sure what caused this rethink. Politically, BW has to create a subsidiary company for its property portfolio and thereby call in any work in that area previously done by Business Units. Also I can say now that, as NABO's BWAf rep at the time, I was privy to some of the KPMG report before it was published and we saw the seeds of a '3rd Sector' future for BW in that, but they didn't openly criticise the Business Unit structure then. However they might have done in the detail we didn't see.

The idea of some 'voluntary sector' involvement has been on NABO's wish list for some time, particularly with regard to asking for 'user' – or preferably boater – representation on the BW Board as a possible deal when the last licence increase was put to us. I am keen that the 'voluntary sector' involvement should be at all levels, not just litter picking, if the true 3rd Sector status is to be achieved.

We have to be careful that the whole thing doesn't end up as a mish-mash of BW, the Waterways Trust and the IWA with boat owners left out in the cold. Perhaps it is time to repeat my well worn equation: '30.000 boats @ £33,000 each = investment of £0.99 Billion pounds'.

We matter.

## Trent Skippers' Guide

Returning to more editorial matters, just a reminder of the fact that there are a number of guidance papers on the website regarding navigating various stretches of the system and rivers in particular.

Our freight carrying colleagues have been pressing for the one on the Trent to be updated to help private boaters co-exist with commercial barges. This was a NABO/BW/CBOA joint venture and available at locks, but it has been replaced by a BW/TBA (The Boating Association) glossier handout with less emphasis on barge traffic.

BW has abandoned printing leaflets and plans to do all information distribution through Waterscape, so we had a meeting with BW and TBA to resolve what could be a safety issue on the Trent - held aboard our boat while conveniently in Newark!

We aim to take the best of the NABO and TBA hand-outs and create a two page A4 PDF document for Waterscape which can be printed out as needed by the BW office at Newark for the lock-keepers to hand out. All in the name of cooperation...

Ours will be updated for our website.

Happy and safe cruising.

*Stuart*

### A POINT TO PONDER

*Caution - opinions expressed here will remain anonymous, are independent of NABO official policy, and statements herein have not been verified as true fact.*

We all hear about boats moving to vacate spaces, but surely:  
**IF A BOAT DOESN'T MOVE ON, THE SPACE IT WOULD HAVE MOVED TO IS AVAILABLE FOR SOMEBODY ELSE.**

This makes a mockery of all time limits and even Acts of Parliament -

Well, doesn't it?

**∴ MORE BOATS NEED MORE CRUISING MOORINGS.**

## SAFETY MATTERS

### *David Fletcher with the latest from BSS*

How old are your fire extinguishers?

The BSS technical Committee has been debating the useful life span of portable fire extinguishers (PFEs%). There is no conclusion at this time. The British Standard for servicing calls for every 5 years, but many say servicing should be annual. Hire boat PFE need annual serving as part of their specific regulations. So if they are more than five years old, you should consider getting them replaced or serviced if it is cost effective. If they are more than ten years old then you are really pushing your luck.

It is not all bad news. The evidence available to BSS shows is that PFEs generally do work and work well to help prevent small fires from escalating. There are no formal records of PFEs failing to operate when needed but there are anecdotal reports of failure and partial discharges. Some recommend turning powder units upside down from time to time, to prevent the powder caking with engine vibration.

At the moment there is no BSS requirement for servicing intervals or replace by date for PFEs (unless the maker has specified this on the unit).

The three units on my boat are certainly over ten years old so I priced some at the Crick Show. The traders there wanted thirty something pounds for a new EN3 2kg unit and about half that to service the old ones which they would have done there and then. A phone call to my local traders confirmed this sort of price too and they recommended servicing every 5 years. So I will probably get them serviced. I will let you know how it turns out.

The serious side of solid fuel stove fires.

Last edition we covered the draft stove regulations, and since then Trevor has made a submission to BSI recording our views. In the BSS Technical Committee we reviewed the data available for 56 fires on boats in the last years. About 50% involve radiant heat transfer from the stove to surrounding structures and materials, and subsequent ignition. Many imply poor attention from the boater contributing to the fire, either over firing, open doors, storage of materials adjacent or lack of maintenance.

The particular issue to mention here is that there are 8 incidents that relate to wood supporting ceramic tiles catching fire. This can be an age related issue, where the backing wood is carbonised over a long period, and then starts to smoulder and then burn. It is known as pyrolysis. It can occur just with age, or triggered by over firing, or by missing grout between the tiles, or missing tiles or holes. I do suggest that you have a look and see what is happening on your boat. And just because it has been like that for years, it doesn't mean it's OK.

## TRENT TIP

If you want to escape Newark on a Saturday night but Cromwell is full of weekenders, moor below Nether Lock. You won't be woken by trains but there is no accounting for crows!

# THE COST OF BOATING SURVEY RESULTS

## *John Slee analyses his findings*

A big **thank you** to those of you who completed our Cost of Boating Survey. Clearly not everyone keeps records of how much running a boat costs, or wants to know how true “**Bring On Another Thousand**” is! Those costs were the “must haves”, so we ended up with 44 very useful sets of data, as in the table below:

Number of Data Sets	Previous Year	This Year
Fixed costs	40	44
Variable Costs (records%)	25	29
Variable Costs (estimate%)	9	11

Our main goal was to find some typical boat costs, so that we could monitor increases year on year. So maybe you will recognise your boat in the table overleaf (figures in brackets in the *This Year* section show the % increase above the *Previous Year* figures; figures marked \* were estimates):

Turning to the other information we gathered while we had respondents' attention: of the 44 boats for whom data was entered, 1 was a **Cruiser**, 2 were **Barges**, 40 were **Narrowboats** and the **Dinghy** had an electric outboard motor. Clearly this doesn't record a statistically reliable sample of NABO boaters, but nevertheless it does act as an indicator. Look out for a simpler, more comprehensive survey in the coming months.

The **Narrowboat dimensions** (including a motor and butty, counted as a single length)

Length	20'1"-30'0"	30'1"-40'0"	40'1"-50'0"	50'1"-60'0"	60'1"-70'0"	70'1"-80'0"	
Count	1	3	10	22	2	2	
Width	6'7"	6'8"	6'9"	6'10"	6'11"	7'0"	7'1"
Count	1	1	1	33	2	1	1

Overall, draft varied between the enviable(?) 9" and 4' 0", as below:

Draft (all)	0'1"- 1'4"	1'5"-1'8"	1'9"-2'0"	2'1"-2'4"	2'5"-2'8"	2'9"-3'0"	3'1"-4'0"
Count	1	3	15	10	10	4	1

19 of the boats had been purchased second-hand, and of those purchased new, the newest was purchased in 2007, the oldest in 1989, with a mean age of 11 years.

Apparently most NABO boaters who own up are around the legal retirement age:

Age	36-45	46-55	56-65	66-75	76-85	86+..
Count	3	3	21	11	1	1

# 16 Typical Boat Costs

	Dinghy	Cruiser	N Barge	W Barge	N/B A	N/B B	N/B C
	7' 10"	27' 0"	61' 0"	72' 0"	41' 0"	56' 10"	70' 0"
Length	4' 2"	7' 0"	6' 10"	13' 10"	6' 10"	6' 10"	6' 10"
Beam	0' 9"	2' 4"	2' 2"	4' 0"	2' 1"	2' 5"	1' 10"
Draft	5	s/h	s/h	s/h	s/h	7	20
Age	90	80	500	123	350	420	60
Hrs Cruising/year							
P	70	374		1254	475	552	650
R	60	145		760	268	308	250
E					1300	1858	515
V						98	80
I		45		1800*	120	338	1240
O		12			20		105
U					50		150
S		98			180	358	300
Y							250
E	130	519		2014*	2043	2718	1415
A		155		1800*	470	794	3125
R	<b>130</b>	<b>674</b>		<b>3814*</b>	<b>2513</b>	<b>3512</b>	<b>4540</b>
T	75 (7.1%)	405 (8.3%)	636	1320 (5.3%)	497 (4.6%)	568 (2.9%)	707 (8.8%)
H	65 (8.3%)	194 (2.8%)	161	700 (-7.9%)	274 (2.2%)	312 (1.3%)	260 (4.0%)
I		262	1790	0	1600 (23.1%)	2730 (46.9%)	555 (7.8%)
S		135	180	111			
Y		89 (97.8%)	300	2000*(11.1%)	150 (25.0%)	482 (42.6%)	806 (-35.0%)
E		13 (8.3%)	130		30 (50.0%)		45 (-57.1%)
A		110		70 (40.0%)		100	
R		77 (-21.4%)	350		200 (11.1%)	427 (19.3%)	375 (25.0%)
		60	250	3280*	325	730	
			1275	2350*	200 (100.0%)	3400	750 (-25.0%)
	140 (7.7%)	816 (57.2%)	2587	2200*(9.2%)	2371 (16.1%)	3610 (32.8%)	1522 (7.6%)
		239 (54.2%)	2550	7630*(323.9%)	1086 (13.1%)	5039 (534.6%)	2076 (-33.6%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140 (7.7%)</b>	<b>1055 (56.5%)</b>	<b>5137</b>	<b>9830*(157.7%)</b>	<b>3457 (37.6%)</b>	<b>8649 (146.3%)</b>	<b>3598 (-20.7%)</b>



On average, contributors spend about 5 hours cruising per day on 93 days, totalling 380 cruising hours and are aboard for 173 days a year.

Even non continuous cruisers are aboard 136 days a year, cruising for half of them.

The 9 Continuous Cruisers cruise, on average, just under 4 hours a day on just over 200 days a year.

Since last November, boaters buying diesel have to sign a declaration at the point of sale, to say how much will be used for propulsion, and how much for domestic purposes (i.e. heating, charging batteries, cooking etc.) Some boatyards will only accept a fixed declaration of 60%, but HMRC give users the right to declare the intended usage. Those who had made a declaration of % diesel used for propulsion declared as below:

%	0	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90
Count	7	3	3	4	1	2	9	1	2	1

## Respondents Areas and Moorings:

### Current Navigation Area

South:	11
London/Thames:	4
Anglian:	1
Midlands:	13
Northwest:	13
Other	2

### Type of Mooring

Canal Off-line:	1
Canal Off-side:	6
Canal Towpath side:	1
Continuous Cruiser:	9
End of Garden:	5
Marina:	20
Out of Water:	1
River:	1

### Home Navigation

Coventry Canal:	2
Grand Union Canal:	8
Kennet & Avon Canal:	3
L & L Canal:	2
Llangollen Canal:	2
Macclesfield Canal:	1
Peak Forest Canal:	1
Regent's Canal:	1
River Nene:	1
River Thames:	2
Shropshire Union Canal:	2
Southwick Canal:	1
Staffs & Worcs Canal:	2
Trent & Mersey Canal:	7
Continuous Cruiser:	9

### Licences

(some boats have more than one licence):

BW Eng & Wales Annual (Canals and Rivs):	36
BW / EA Annual Gold Licence:	6
British Waterways Short-Term Licence:	2
EA Annual Licence (Anglian):	1
EA Annual Licence (Thames):	2
EA Short-Term Licence (Thames):	4
Avon Trust short term:	1
River Avon, Bristol Harbour:	1
BW 6 month Canal & River:	1

We hope you found this analysis interesting. Was the survey worth it? We certainly think so, and we are grateful to the 38 people who said they are willing to repeat the exercise next year. It helps us represent YOU better.

*John Slee*

## RIVERS

### ***Bow Creek Regulation Of Navigation***

The Port of London Authority has assumed responsibility for navigation in the tidal Bow Creek with effect from 1 June 2009. This follows a joint BW / PLA risk assessment to establish procedures for use of the newly completed Three Mills Lock (previously known as the Prescott Lock) and the proposed movement of construction materials and other traffic in Bow Creek to and from the Olympic site at Stratford.

British Waterways has ceded navigational control and management to PLA and consequently all vessel movements will be regulated in accordance with relevant PLA rules, regulations, codes of practice and directions. It is anticipated that the regime will operate until the end of 2013. Upstream of Three Mills Lock in the Prescott Channel will remain under the jurisdiction of BW.

Charts for the area are available from the PLA Port Hydrographer (01 474 562 207). Traffic control will be carried out by London VTS based at the Thames Barrier Navigation Centre at Woolwich and all vessels subject to PLA General Direction 4 (use of VHF radio) will have to obtain traffic clearance on VHF Channel 14.

Any recreational craft not subject to the General Direction on the use of VHF radio must contact London VTS by telephone 10 minutes before entering or navigating in any part of Bow Creek. Telephone number for London VTS is 0208 855 0315.

There are restrictions on sections of Bow Creek where passing and overtaking will not be permitted but pleasure craft must expect to meet commercial vessels and barges under tow in this busy area of waterway. Passage on BW waterways upstream of Bow Locks and Three Mills lock will be controlled via BW Limehouse office on 020 7308 9930.

Our Rivers Secretary holds copies of all PLA Notices to Mariners and anyone considering using Bow Creek is urged to obtain detailed information from PLA and BW to ensure safe and enjoyable cruising.

## 20/20 FORESIGHT

### ***Fiona Slee reports from one of BW's Roadshows***

Yesterday I went to a BW Consultation meeting about their 2020 "vision" held at at Bilborrow, Lancashire.

For those who are not aware of "Twenty Twenty" - this is the idea that BW look to become a Third Sector organisation (Charitable Sector) over the next ten years, with core funding from the government and a variety of stakeholders: all the jargon and phraseology I have been hearing in my working life for the past 8 years!

The meeting was chaired by BW Operations Director Vince Moran, with Caroline Killeavy (BW Customer and PR Manager), Mike Marshall (NW Customer Operations Manager) and various staff from the Wigan Office.

The meeting was heavily dominated by local issues, all of which seem to be common throughout the system i.e. dredging, moorings (auctions and visitor), lack of communication by BW and lack of bank staff etc.

The 2020 Vision had rather less discussion – mainly because it appears that there is nothing substantial in the way of strategic planning yet and it was presented as “a toe in the water” job so far by BW. It was noted that the proposals had had little publicity as far as the average boater was concerned.

The moves proposed so far seem good, although I have some reservations.

1. Removal of a layer of middle management
2. £10 million savings from restructuring directed towards maintenance annually
3. 11 smaller waterways units
4. Establish a new regeneration directorate
5. Create specialist teams
6. Move to Third Sector organisation/trust over 10 years

Points 1-3 are already happening. These may help to deal with some of the more immediate problems but, to quote Vince Moran, the Trust idea “may never happen” . . . “BW may not be able to deliver it”.

However a long term strategy is vital to enable the waterways to be maintained in their present state, let alone improved. £30 million more/year is necessary to do just this.

To my mind and from past experience, many Third Sector organisations are struggling with funding from government and stakeholders. The priorities and “goal posts” for funding change with the political colour at national and local level. Money from “funders” is available for new projects but not necessarily for long term sustainable work.

It takes a very strong, well supported and well known organisation to survive in today's target driven, overly accountable, tick box management imposed on any organisation funded in this way.

Consultation can be an empty exercise. However we were assured that this proposal is in its very early stages, so I hope that the real purpose is achieved and that BW get an understanding of where this group of stakeholders, i.e. boaters, stand on the issue.

Walkers, anglers, cyclists as well as boaters are all stakeholders and have an interest in maintaining our wonderful waterways. How these are to be engaged in the process I wait to see. Meanwhile we continue to be the stakeholders with the economic majority!

Personally, I think the most important thing is that BW understand the issues that distress boaters and continue to work towards the most effective, economic way of “Saving Our Waterways” for the use of all sections of the community, involving as many funding streams as possible and keeping this superb national asset open for all.

## DON'T GET UPSET!

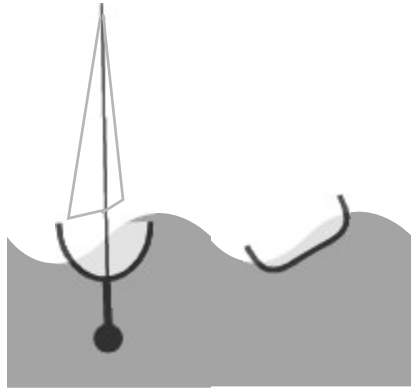
### *Stuart on keeping an 'even keel'*

One of the worst fears for anyone who steps off dry land into a vessel floating on water is that it should tip over and sink. Luckily this thought rarely occurs to anyone stepping aboard a cabin cruiser or anything bigger on the calm waters of our inland navigations, but it matters with canoes and dinghies.

Stability is the key – the ability of a hollow vessel to keep its openings above the waterline, i.e. not get upset. There is a lot of theory to working out centres of gravity and centres of buoyancy, but basically you can look at stability two ways. One is where the boat 'follows the Earth' and the other where it 'follows the Sea'. Most boats show a bit of both

The first is typified by a model yacht where it is kept upright by a lump of lead in a deep keel. The Earth's gravity does the work and the hull can be long and narrow to reduce water resistance yet it can still withstand the force of the wind on its sails without heeling over, spilling the wind or worse still, getting swamped.

However the surface of the sea is not always level and keeping a boat level to the Earth isn't always the answer to keeping the sea out. That is best achieved by letting the boat accommodate the slope of the waves like a raft. Short, shallow and broad are the best qualities here, or even multi-hull.

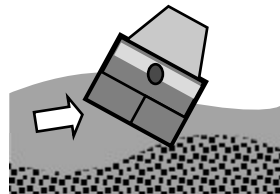


You might ask if stability is a safety issue for inland mariners? Probably not a lot, until you see eleven hefty blokes and a stack of tinnies perilously close to sliding off the roof of a day boat! In spite of rules being brought in by the MCA, heeling over is rarely a cause of sinking unless the boat has holes close to the waterline. Inland boats are much more likely to sink from water leaking in below the waterline, water pouring in from above, e.g. in locks, or as a result of encounters with submerged objects, e.g. grounding on ledges or cills.

However, heeling itself can be dangerous. Rolling at sea or in the wash of passing vessels can damage the contents and even occupants of a boat, and boats that 'follow the sea' can be particularly vulnerable. There is a crude justice, though. The hull shapes that 'follow the sea' seem to create more waves than those that 'follow the Earth' so they can give as good as they get!

As far as rolling movement is concerned, narrowboats tend to 'follow the Earth' and seem much more stable than one might expect, pleasantly surprising for those who take them onto wavy waters. However the combination of not heeling with the sea and an open foredeck can make them prone to being swamped by waves coming from abeam.

Another danger for narrowboats, particularly on waters like the Severn Estuary, is being swept sideways on to a sandbank by the tide. The hard angle of the chine, particularly if the baseplate stands proud, digs into the sand and the force of the water can roll the boat right over.



Much more common, but hardly life threatening unless you are inside doing something very critical, is heeling when people step aboard, particularly if they put their full weight on the side deck or gunwale as they do so, rather than stepping over and putting their weight more central. As their weight is taken by the side of the boat, an equivalent weight of water is displaced under the side of the boat as it tips - Archimedes. How far it goes down depends on the area, and to some extent, the shape of the boat. People inside will probably be more aware of the angle of heel than the amount the side goes down, so the broader the boat the less it will be felt.

I have used the word 'heeling' rather than 'rolling' deliberately, to refer to a sustained departure from the level, but there is more to the way a boat moves which is due to the shape and mass of the hull. How quickly does it lean over? After a disturbance, does it go on rocking or does it settle down? Is the movement slow and nauseous or sharp and alarming? Can one step aboard quickly and reduce the movement by being light on foot? Does the boat rock violently when the waves match the natural rocking rhythm of the hull?

The scientific name for the cure to sustained rocking is 'damping'. It has nothing to do with wetting but has more in common with the term 'suspension dampers' for what are usually called shock absorbers on a car. On a boat this is done by bilge keels or that square chine that can be the undoing of a narrowboat on the Severn. Damping is not about keeping the boat level, either with the water surface or the surface of the Earth, but with opposing any sort of movement.

Initially the mass, or more correctly 'moment of inertia', of the boat will resist a heeling force, but if the force persists the mass of the boat will accept and even prolong the movement. What is wanted is to block the easy flow of water round the cross section of the hull. This is what keels and hard angles do by creating energy sapping turbulence. Barges like Dutch Tjalken have rounded chines which are strong and friendly to forward motion but can roll badly. Fitting bilge keels can help, but one has to be careful not to overdo it as they also resist steering and may prevent the hull 'following the sea' enough for rough water safety.

The ideal shape for a boat doesn't exist, it is down to 'horses for courses'. There will always be people taking their vessels outside their comfort zone, but a sensible understanding of stability can make this a matter of life rather than death.

## SUSTAINABLE BOATING

### *- a view from across the pond by Andrew Colyer*

I have been pondering over the last few months about where to go next with my exploration of sustainable boating. After much consideration and reading I thought I would share with you some of the more crazy ideas I have found. They mostly stem from a book called *Handmade Houseboats*, by Russell Conder. It is a wealth of inspiration from our American cousins. To an extent, this article is a synopsis of that book. It is not a coffee table book, full of glossy pictures; instead it is a reference book for those attempting to live independently afloat.

The Houseboat has a long history in America, where it seems there has been very little building restrictions, and so a free reign has run, creating some quite wacky developments. Another difference to note is that most of these ideas are for non-moving vessels, and so not totally suitable for our cruising boats.

The book begins with a historical look through other houseboats, from Cleopatra's boat on the Nile to the turn of the century Thames college barge. It then suggests ways for keeping your houseboat afloat. The assumption is that you are likely to be building it yourself! Three options for this are steel buoys welded together, foam blocks or "the humble bathtub". So, we are off! Don't worry, good calculations and some drawings are given, so you know what you are doing!

The book covers many of the topics I have discussed in previous articles, from wiring to insulation. It also spends some time suggesting layouts that would allow better movement of air, and so ventilate the boat better: all important for reducing mouldy corners, and getting the most out of your heating. Principally, this involves open plan layouts, centrally fitted solid fuel stoves and holes in cupboard doors, enabling the air to circulate well. I love the constant reference to chip ovens!!

Assuming we are not going to be building our houseboat, I will pass over this section of the book, except to note the suggestion of 6" thick walls. There is some serious insulation going on! Imagine that in one of our narrowboats!!

Now we can look into the systems for the boat.

Firstly we have rainwater collection from the roof, into a barrel. I am aware of a few boaters doing this. I do not know if it is drunk or treated at all, or just used for the toilet /washing etc. If anything, it does reinforce the point that water is a precious resource, and not to be wasted.

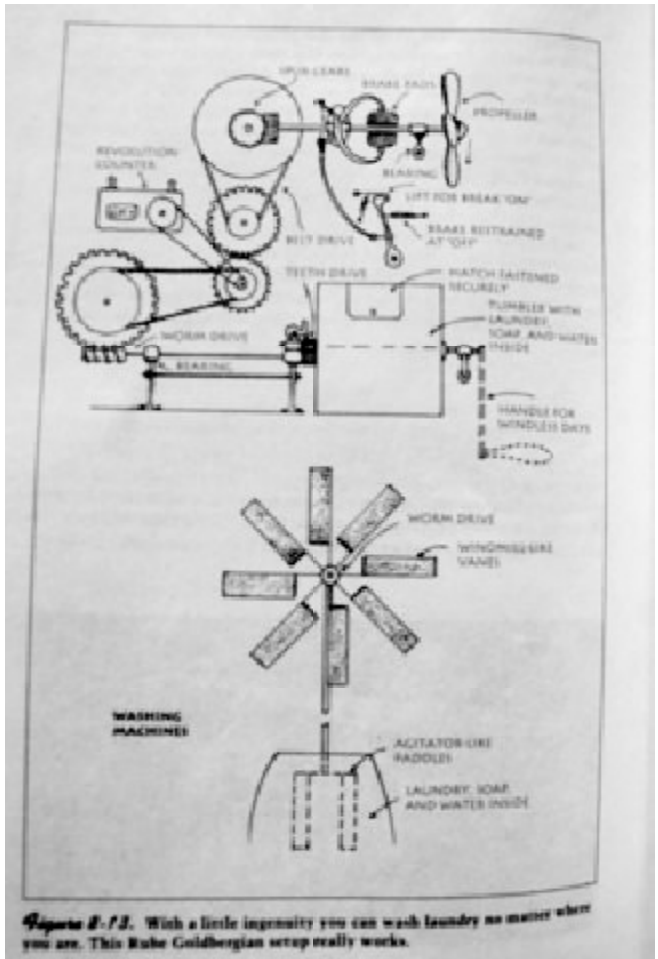
We then get on to the toilet discussion. As we all know this is one of those subjects we all seem to end up talking about! Or is it just me! There are some interesting comments on composting toilets. Again, I know of a few, but with limited success. The book's suggestion is that a holding tank little bigger than some normal holding tanks will do the job. I have seen a new build company fitting them into their boats. They are ugly things, but a very sustainable solution.

There are a few other suggestions that treat the waste onboard, from using chemicals to redwood chips, and chlorine, making the waste suitable (by US coast guard standards) for pumping overboard. As interesting as the ideas are, I think from different parts of the world, the author is little more impressed as BW or the EA would be!!

Next we look at hot water. Similarly to the design I have used, with fitting copper pipes under the roof of the boat, then painting the area black, and plumbing it into the calorifier via a thermostatic switch. The author suggests rigging a few loops of black hose in a glass-fronted box (discarded window%) with aluminium foil on the bottom. On a day to day level, the solar showers we see at all the camping and boat shows are very effective, and save a lot of power when you consider how much energy it takes to heat that volume of water.

Now to probably my favourite part of the book. The drawing shown here is for a home made, variable operation, fully sustainable washing machine!!! It can be peddled, hand turned or wind driven. The choice is yours! It is pointed out that 12V models are also available.

We now look at electricity. I will use this to reinforce the simple points of being as efficient as possible, having wires that are at least thick enough for the job, and to make sure the system is in good order. I once tightened one nut, and my alternator went from 3 amps to 30 amps! Oh! And don't forget the solar panel. Without the fridge on (we have a cold store), on one 90 Watt panel, I have not run my engine, except for cruising, for over 6 weeks. The voltage is now 13.5 V, as I write this on a lovely sunny day.



Many of the other inventions would not pass the Boat Safety Scheme! I have really enjoyed the book, and would recommend it. Next to come from me I think will be a review of some of the other books I have acquired on boats and boat living.

### Gate Debate

What a good exposition of the comparative tasks involved with gates left, or gates closed, represented by the table Bjorn Inabarn set out in the article in the last NABO News. How strongly I agree with the statements that 'A lock in this state (ie half full) will be ready for nobody' and 'If it acquires this state during the day between uses then it must leak so badly it should be fixed as a matter of priority'. I have used this last argument when the occasional officious person has questioned my leaving gates, and a clip board produced with a request for the information regarding the schedule for the obviously necessary remedial work, works wonders, sometimes. (Some people are incapable of reasonable thought)

Bjorn's almost last paragraph suggests that the problem of 'Shutters' might be less so on flights of locks but the sight I have often seen of people assiduously shutting gates on flights such as Stoke Bruerne on a busy summer's day when it is obvious that as many boats are going one way as the other is frustrating in the extreme.

What Bjorn's otherwise excellent table does not emphasise is the safety implications of the different situations. One of the most potentially dangerous actions we all regularly perform is simply 'Getting off and on the boat'. Don't laugh at this, it is genuinely one of the most dangerous things we do, and the more we do it the more times we are at risk. It is quite obvious and indisputable that the Gates closed

situation involves much more 'getting off and on', particularly so if you are on your own on the boat as I used always to be.

Oh, you might have gathered I am a convinced and committed 'Leaver'.

*David Daines*

### Tap dancing for two?



In Braunston there is a new 'improved' type of water facility. The improvement is the addition of two taps either side of the change over lever. The original design relied on the operation of the lever to get water out of either the screw on terminal or the push on terminal. When the lever was upright no water came out. The new facility provides two screw on terminals in the form of taps. The user requiring a screw on terminal now has a choice of two. It is in fact possible to attach two screw-on water hoses. In order to get the water to flow you now need to open the tap that your pipe is attached to and operate the lever towards that tap. Unfortunately the other user will have to wait until your tank is full as the water can only flow one way or the other even when both taps are open!

*Charles Moore*



## Quick Fix?

Regarding the letter from David Daines in the April issue - "*Please replace like for like*", just a personal comment on the subject to pass on to readers who are concerned that BW are replacing lock gates without gate paddles.

Because no dredging is being done, pools between locks are silting up. Unfortunately locks still receive the same amount of water - 'Laws of physics'. So, each time a lock is filled it draws down the silt that gets behind the gates causing the gates to leak and shorten their life span. It is like an abrasive paste grinding the timbers away.

By renewing gates without the gate paddles - yes - makes the filling of locks slower, but it lessens the effect of the silt grinding the gate timbers away; a quick fix for BW!

The question now is how will BW solve the problem when the pools have completely silted up where the pool above is completely dry?

Perhaps BW will re-write the laws of physics?

*Alan Holden.  
MT Anna*

*[ If the ponds are completely silted up there will be no boat traffic and no usage of the locks - problem solved!  
Ed.]*

## Whacked by Windlass

Just a short note on the matter of getting biffed by your own lock handle, referred to in the latest News. This is much more likely to happen with handles that have a loose sleeve on the grip, if the handle does come off the spindle there is nothing to restrain

the hefty bit coming round and clouting the hapless handler. Far better to have a solid handle with a nicely smoothed grip for your hands. Then if it does come off, you have the chance of being able to grip it tight before it does any harm.

Incidentally, if like me you just love the 'Dunton Double' handles remember that a magnet will not pick up an aluminium object so before you use it, fix some steel tube or wire around it for the magnet to get hold of. Just wrap some polythene round the duralumin first (These handles are duralumin not aluminium, the latter is far too soft) as otherwise corrosion sets up between the metals.

*David Daines*

## Save a pub

I had the chance to visit the Coachmakers Arms in Hanley on Saturday. It is an old town centre pub, unaltered and still maintaining a multi-room layout. Few examples of this type of pub are left.

It is a very popular venue for both locals and visitors to Hanley. Yet, the local authority are supporting a planning application to demolish the pub to make way for more car parking.

A petition has been set up on-line to get H.M. Government to call in this application, and I ask that you follow the link below and add your name. Pubs like this must not be lost!

[petitions.number10.gov.uk/  
coachmakers/](http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/coachmakers/)

I ask that you do this as a matter of some urgency, as the petition closes *soon*.

*Ron Elder*



You might well ask!

This is an inside page from the '2020 Vision' document and it is clear that BW can afford fancy graphic design and colour printing for corporate literature, but not, it seems, for information about winter works for its boating customers.

Once again we question how BW spends its money.

## **CAN YOU HELP GET MORE MEMBERS?**

NABO needs exposure round the network where the ordinary boater can see what we have to offer. To this end, we have made some light-weight roof displays which fold flat for storage and assemble to just over 3 foot by 1 foot. Each only needs something heavy placed inside to hold it down and has a showerproof holder for leaflets.

If you would like to have one of these to help spread the word, please contact Richard Carpenter, especially if you are going to any smaller events. Don't forget, if you fill in your name in the 'Introduced by' box on all the leaflets you only need three takers a year to get your subscription to NABO free!

*RCR Advertisement*



## *eavesdrops from under the Council table*

Now you all know by now that I am only here for the food - I make no excuse for that and the new menu at the Waggon and Horses in Oldbury where all my bods meet every six weeks met with approval! But, and I mean but, my bods didn't start with what they were having for lunch, they got stuck in with enthusiasm to an agenda with 18 items on it! Things they do for their members still impress me as I sit here waiting for lunch!!!

Two things that I noticed this time - first everyone was really excited about the results of some legal advice they had got which seems to back up things they had all been saying about their mate BW and the actions he takes sometimes. The second was the number of times throughout the 5 (yes 5!) hour meeting someone would say when dealing with their part of the agenda that the problem and issues would be solved if BW put in some more proper moorings. If I heard "moorings" one I heard them 50 times!

You see, even with my little bugs brain ( oh here's a fact you probably didn't know about us bugs - you could knock my head off and I could live for a month without it cos my brain is spread all over my body) some of the facts these bods bring up seem pretty simple to solve. The BW big wigs say that every year, even in these hard times, a thousand new boats are appearing on the canals, (presume there must be more going onto the rivers too?). Where do they go? Not all into all the new marinas I assume so they must be out there on the banks - and they must need somewhere to tie up and stay? Surely then someone's got to provide more places ??? Simple!

Oh, and then what happens when all the boats in marinas and stuff decide to actually do what they are for (cruise you dummy!) 'cos when they go out they need places to stop to do what people do when they stop! So if BW in particular is trying to get more use of the waterways by boaters it's not about just providing marinas - it about providing places for boats to tie up when they are cruising! Simple, really!

The Bod whose a continuous cruiser gets quite agitated about the fact he plays by the rules and continuously cruises as do most of continuous cruisers but often can find nowhere to tie up - even in the country were he would prefer lots of the time cos he likes "his peace and quite". Our BW mate needs to dredge better on some of the banks it seems cos that would help.

Well before I go I should comment on the debate the bods had on Cricket! Well I assume it was cricket cos it was about something called 20/20! Seems someone had a vision and called it 20/20 and it was going to be wonderful and everything will be great for the Waterways. Well the big Bod (the one you would not take on in a brawl) asked about what happened to the 20/12 vision from the current BW Big Wig who gets twice as much pay as the Prime Minister! It's the same people now doing a 20/20 vision so rather than welcome it in principle most of the bods just saw it as a way for the current "leaders" at BW to keep their jobs for another 10 or 12 years. If something was going to happen for the good it needed to be driven at the top (like a loose ball through the See -

covers - a clever reference to cricket!!!) by people who used the Waterways and not the discredited people who run it now.

So that's me until next time, well fed by wide range of menu this time and some good homemade biscuits from a kindly boaty lady too!

Ta-ra!



*The character Brummy Bug is entirely fictional and any semblance to any exoskeletal creature living or dead is entirely accidental. No slur is intended towards inhabitants of Birmingham or the Black Country nor is any criticism implied of the hygiene of the meeting venue.*

## **And finally...**

Member Ron Elder has just sent this shot of the Caldron approaching the top of the Stockton Brook locks. Which side is the towpath? (clue, look at the bridge!)



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