




NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 5 October 2020

The background of the cover is a photograph of a canal scene. In the foreground, a narrowboat is moored on the left, its reflection clearly visible in the calm water. In the middle ground, a stone bridge with a wooden archway spans the canal. Another narrowboat is visible on the right side of the canal. The scene is surrounded by lush green trees and foliage, with sunlight filtering through the leaves, creating a bright and scenic atmosphere.

**SHARED BOATING
THE MYSTERY OF
GAS TESTING
MORE NONSENSE
ABOUT RED DIESEL**



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Next NABO News copy date

Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are most welcome. Images in JPEG format please. Please email your contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk or post to the Editor by November 21st 2020.

Cover photo

Autumn at Kingswood Junction, photo taken by Peter Fellows.

Win a year's free membership by having your photo selected for the front cover of NABO News. Please email photos as JPEG attachments, ideally portrait format with a file size of 2MB or larger.



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This is the first issue since lockdown ended and it features the widespread dismay by boaters at the state of the infrastructure that they encountered when they restarted cruising.

Lack of maintenance and vegetation management were already features of the Boater Survey responses, summarised in this issue, which were given before Covid-19 struck. But Mark Tizard brings the problems up to date, comparing CRT's PR spin with the reality on the ground.

New blood to replace old friends

Editor **Peter Fellows** says that, with meetings held by phone or Zoom, it has never been easier to support NABO

Mike Rodd's regional report includes his first experience of e-scooters on the towpath and I've included a letter on this, written by NABO to CRT's Chief Operating Officer. Helen Hutt has written her first regional report from the Avon and also reports on a recent elected reps. meeting with CRT's Head of Boating. Howard Anguish, NABO's shared ownership rep., has written the first part of an article on shared boating, together with his look back

at NABO News 15 years ago. David Fletcher has also been busy while unable to cruise, describing new regulations on fuels for solid-fuel stoves, an update on proposed changes

to regulations on the sale of red diesel, and delving into the mysteries of gas testing on boats for BSS certification. I spent part of my lockdown considering what owners might be really saying when they select a name for their boat, to be followed by a second part in December.

It's coming up to the Association's AGM in a few weeks' time and Phil Goulding has described his experiences of being on NABO Council. I would endorse his and Mike Rodd's comments in his Chair's column, that the Council needs new, preferably younger, members to bring new ideas and experiences. If you can spare a morning six times a year, sitting at home with the phone for the foreseeable Covid future, your input into Council meetings will be highly appreciated. I have included nomination forms in this issue for you to apply. One member has responded to our request for help and we warmly welcome Peter Braley as the new East Midlands rep.

Goodbye to old friends

Sadly, I end this with news of the deaths of two people who made an important contribution to NABO's success over the years.

Sadie Heritage was one of the first members to join NABO and our East Anglia rep. for 20 years, contributing regularly to NABO News. Geoffrey Rogerson was NABO's Legal Affairs rep. for many years and, on a personal note, one of the Councillors who offered me great support when I started editing the newsletter nine years ago (not to mention his amusing, often acerbic, asides in Council meetings that regularly found their way into 'Fly on the Wall'). As a tribute to his help, I have included one of the cartoons that he contributed to NABO News, drawn in Mel Calman's simple evocative style, under the pseudonym 'Canalman'.



Back on board, but.....

Chair, Mike Rodd is enjoying cruising again, despite the lack of maintenance and e-scooters.

Boating at last! For many of us, it was a great joy to be able to get back boating again and for me also to resume being a Boatmaster for the K&A Canal Trust's trip-boat, the 'Rose of Hungerford'. Given that the income generated by the trip boats (with all the boats being operated totally by volunteers) is its major source of funding, the impact on the Trust of the long period of non-operation has been horrendous. This has been especially critical as we get to the end of the (partially) HLF-funded restoration work at the Crofton Pumping Station, as the boat trips are contributing the bulk of the required matching funding. Making the trip-boats 'socially distanced' has meant a serious drop in the maximum number of passengers we can carry (about half), but with significant demand for places, at least a reasonable income is now being generated.

Being finally able to take my own boat out on the Mon & Brec has been wonderful (although some weeks after this was possible in England—the Welsh Assembly being a law unto itself)—if at times made rather 'exciting', as the almost total lack of regular maintenance has reduced the canal to a single boat's width in places! And although the vital income now being generated by the hire-boat companies is only to be welcomed, virtually every hire-boat, day-boat, canoe, etc., was cruising! One seriously unwelcome aspect was the number of very obviously 'first-timers' who had bought cheap portable kayaks/canoes and clearly hadn't bothered to take any notice of CRT's or the EA's advice, and were behaving in a totally irresponsible and dangerous fashion—even de-

manding to be allowed to take their fragile little craft into locks alongside a 30-ton steel boat!

I also had my first experiences with e-scooters (electrically powered scooters). I am fully aware of CRT's statement, which essentially states that they are not permitted on towpaths, but in practice that message has simply not been understood by users. As a result, e-scooters, which can travel at almost 20mph, are rapidly becoming a real dan-



Back on board, but...

NABO Chair **Mike Rodd** is enjoying cruising again, despite the lack of maintenance and proliferation of e-scooters

ger, exacerbated by riders wearing headphones blaring loud music and oblivious to warning sounds around them. Perhaps CRT will only take notice when there is a serious accident?

The overall state of our waterways must be of concern to all of us: literally every few days we receive reports of locks failing, bridges out of commission and uncut vegetation, making some canals almost unusable. Those of us who have been able to go out cruising are only too familiar with this situation. I realise, of course, that CRT had to cut back on staff, furloughing many, and this has naturally had an impact. But what has to be of deep concern is the number of facility failures that had been reported, but no action taken. I also have personal gripes about the on-going management of CRT's contractors (e.g. towpaths left in a mess)—and why can't someone instruct them how to moor their work-boats? Please, not on lock-landings!

As I mentioned my previous Chair's column, on the non-tidal



Paddle boarders in Northampton
Photo: CRT

Thames, we have joined up with four other organisations, representing users of recreational powered craft, to encourage greater engagement and co-operation with the Environment Agency. (The organisations involved are: the Association of Thames Yacht Clubs, the Dutch Barge Association, the Residential Boat Owners' Association, the Thames Motor Boaters Association and NABO.) Already, the relationship with the new management team at the EA has proved to be good, and far less confrontational than over the past few years. However, we are very concerned about the delay in awarding the contract for the management of all EA's Thames moorings, and we are standing by to take action on this if the outcome is not acceptable to the bulk of users. The problem is that we are aware that the two previous contract-holders are among those bidding again—and users' experience of one of these has been very poor.

Over the past month, we have sadly lost two of our most hard-working members—Geoffrey Rogerson and Sadie Heritage (formerly Dean). Both made huge contributions to NABO and to the waterways in general. I personally spent much time with Geoffrey, as he continuously

cruised on the K&A, and he provided me with invaluable legal advice and guidance—especially by taking the lead on our interactions with NABO's professional legal advisors. Tributes to both of these fine and committed people will be found in this edition of NABO News.

Their loss, however, also highlights an on-going problem: as I mentioned in the last issue, your NABO Council has continued to meet regularly via teleconferences, and the meetings have proved to be very productive and well-attended. As we approach the forthcoming AGM, however, it does deeply concern me that we are not attracting new and (being brutally honest) younger members to join us on the Council. NABO has never been more needed than now—at least if we are to ensure the continuing protection of our wonderful waterways. We know that both CRT and the EA will be increasingly under immense pressure to reduce their costs as they both come up for renewal of their government funding, and we are already seeing (as mentioned above) a reduction in planned maintenance, etc. So both organisations will need our critical support—and we only can do that if we believe that both organisations are listening to us (the users) and are doing their very best to meet their obligations in protecting and maintaining their waterways. So, please give thought to standing for election to Council. The work is not arduous—especially as we (and CRT and EA) are increasingly learning how to work together electronically.

Now that at last we can all enjoy boating again, I wish you everything of the best! I hope your canal or river is not too badly affected by the lack of regular maintenance, and that you are not attacked by too many paddle boarders or e-scooters!

Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at the Council meeting in September

A full house, with Council meeting by teleconference. First up, Councillors remembered Geoffrey Rogerson, NABO's legal adviser, who died in August, and also had news of the death of long-term member Sadie Dean.

Safety was next, with some worrying trends over the summer: electric scooter riders have been spotted in many places, speeding along towpaths and a future accident is inevitable. Although powered vehicles are not allowed on towpaths, CRT seems to accept people riding electric bicycles, so scooter riders will presumably say that they too are permitted. It is not the method of propulsion that is the issue, but the speed at which riders travel.

Encouraged by CRT's 'wellbeing' message, many people have been taking to the water post-lockdown and buying boats, especially small inflatable paddle boats. With little experience of the waterways they have been causing problems for other boaters. There was also a near accident in Chirk tunnel, when an organised group of canoeists passed through without lights. A boater was ten yards into the tunnel before realising that they were there and had to reverse to allow them out—they were very lucky that no-one was crushed.

For most of the summer, there have been almost weekly reports of waterway infrastructure failures, especially locks, with the Rochdale closed to navigation because of leaking gates, delays and closures on the Buckby flight, Welford lock, locks on

the K&A, Trent lock and the three Hillmorton paired locks. In the last case, paddles have been broken for weeks and single locks have been used, causing a queue of 28 boats in late August. Stoppage notices often say 'unexpected maintenance issues,' but CRT chose to furlough staff and missed the opportunity for maintenance and repairs during the months when the system was closed caused by inexperienced boaters, leading to the failures. At Meadow Lane lock in Nottingham, one boater thought it a good idea to tie up to the bollards and empty the lock to hang up the boat, presumably to inspect the hull. The weight of the boat caused several yards of wall to collapse into the lock.

Better news on the Thames, with the five boating organisations continuing to develop a good relationship with the EA managers. But the privately owned moorings at Beale Park have been closed due to the amount of rubbish left there (by day-trippers?) and restricted access caused by double-parked cars.

Councillors concluded with a discussion of NABO's response to the Government consultation on future use of red diesel. They still think that the UK should ignore the EU ruling and retain the use of red diesel on inland waterways.

Finally, the Council thought that the Covid-19 situation is unlikely to change significantly in time for the November AGM and a virtual meeting is increasingly on the cards.

Byeee



NABO calendar 2020

Council meetings are normally held at boat clubs in the Midlands area. However, with Covid-19 they will be held by teleconference in October and November.

Members are welcome to join in the teleconferences; please just let the Secretary or Chair know in advance (contact details inside cover).

The remaining dates for Council meetings in 2020 are: October 10th and November 14th (includes AGM).

Geoffrey Rogerson

Mike Rodd remembers long-serving NABO legal advisor and friend.



huge contribution to NABO, leading all aspects of its legal work, closely supported when necessary by the Association's solicitors. His wise council will be sorely missed.

Geoffrey was born on the 11th May 1934 in London and as a child experienced the horrors of the blitz. After the war, he did his national service as an artillery man, serving in Egypt, and on completion was asked to become a permanent officer. However, he had other plans for what followed and he pursued many interests, travelling widely and, in his latter-years, establishing a specialist car part manufacturing company—reflecting his long-term passion for cars. One of his other passions was golf—at which he excelled, although, according to a long-term friend, he thought the rules were just a set of guidelines and he was reputed to rather play by his own regulations!

NABO is deeply saddened by the loss of its long-term legal advisor and council member, Geoffrey Rogerson, who passed away on the 3rd August after several years of illnesses.

He was known as a gentle gentleman by all who met him, with great pride in his own family, and respected by all. But despite this seeming mildness, he was always direct, honest and, when necessary, outspoken. With his deep practical knowledge of matters-legal, Geoffrey made a

A long-term canal (and whisky!) fanatic, his boat on the K&A was one of the very first to travel up the restored Caen Hill flight. And for many years he lived on his boat on the K&A as an active, rule-abiding continuous cruiser, setting a very clear example to all. This always ensured that he could provide NABO's Council with the best possible guidance on mooring matters. Geoffrey seldom missed a Council meeting, always accompanied by his partner, Belinda.

Sadie Heritage

Remembered by Brenda Ward of the BCN Society

Those of you who knew Sadie Heritage, formerly Dean, will be very sad to hear that she passed away on Friday 29th August. You may have known Sadie with her narrowboat 'Straw Bear' and then later with Fred Heritage and heritage boat, 'Lynx'. When she took Straw Bear to a rally, instead of bunting she attached old fashioned bloomers to a line and proudly flew them above her boat. Sadie was a happy smiley person who loved her life, loved Fred and the boats. I heard from her in early August when she said that she was in hospital but didn't say what the problem was or the seriousness of her condition, so this has come as a great shock.

Peter Fellows adds: Sadie was an early NABO member, joining at the start of the Association in 1991. She was on the Council from around 1999 to 2001 and was Minute



Sadie with puppet
Photo: Brenda Ward

Secretary for a while during this time. She was also NABO's East Anglia rep. for about 20 years and a regular contributor to NABO News, especially concerning the Middle Level, where she moored. She will be sadly missed.

River Avon Helen Hutt



This year has been a tough one for the Avon Navigation Trust, as well as for CRT and other waterways authorities. The massive floods of October and November 2019, followed by a series of smaller ones in January and February 2020, created a huge clean-up operation around the river's locks, weirs and visitor mooring sites. Among all this, a couple of weir barriers were stolen in the dead of night!

Before ANT could get on top of all these issues, Covid 19 struck, meaning that jobs requiring two or more of the engineering team to work in close proximity had to be postponed. The floods damaged the pump-out station at Evesham, still awaiting repair. Since boating got underway again in June, overflowing refuse bins,

Around the regions with NABO's regional reps

in particular at Offenham and Luddington, have been causing further grief. And then two storms raised the river levels and brought down a number of trees, blocking the navigation for a few days. Nonetheless, maintenance issues have been few, although we had a failed gate at Welford on Avon lock, which was winched back into place in record time.

ANT volunteers, who would normally be caring for lock sites and other locations, also had to be stood down as a result of Covid-19. As the group was gearing up to resume activities, it was dealt a cruel blow with the sudden death of volunteer leader, Nick Farr, who collapsed and died from a



Not much room under Abbey Bridge, Evesham
Photo: Helen Hutt

brain haemorrhage whilst working on site at the end of August.

Notwithstanding all these traumas, the Avon remains one of the prettiest rivers in the country and it has been a joy to get out and about on the water for a few weeks.

Monmouth and Brecon Canal

Mike Rodd



With the Welsh Assembly holding things back by a few weeks, the canal finally was available to boaters on 15th August and immediately virtually every single hire-boat and many private boats took advantage of the opportunity! But, like most canals, there had been little maintenance and vegetation growth was horrendous. While some pubs did not take advantage of being able to partially open, it was good to see busy trade being done by those who did. The two recent bad storms also made things difficult, with many trees coming down, but CRT was commendable for getting its contractors to quickly sort things out.

Kennet and Avon Canal

Mike Rodd

Although many hire-boats were out, surprisingly, the reopening of the canal did not lead to a large number of private boaters cruising. Most public trip boats managed to operate, albeit with severe restrictions on passenger numbers. Lock failures continue to be a problem and water shortages at the peak (just beyond Crofton) led to some locks being closed overnight.

The deluge of widebeams going down to the Bath end (for student accommodation?) continued, adding to the non-moving problems there. Otherwise, once the canal reopened after the lockdown, most continuous cruisers elsewhere seem to be moving.

The condition of the waterway itself is not good, as little vegetation removal has taken place over the shutdown, and this is resulting in some serious problems with reed growth.

The restoration work at the Crofton Pumping Station, although somewhat delayed by the lockdown, has almost been completed and the station is partially reopened to visitors—although steaming is not possible under present conditions.

Membership Matters

NABO Council

Phil Goulding offers his perspective on what's involved as a councillor.

NABO's AGM is scheduled to be held on Saturday November 14th at 10.45am by teleconference. At the AGM, NABO is looking to recruit additional Council members to help in information gathering, decision making and the overall running of the Association.

A NABO Councillor's role can vary from as little as...

- sharing experiences, information and opinions, regarding present and developing issues facing boaters;
- being a regional 'eyes and ears';
- representing NABO on a CRT or EA consultation group.

...through to holding a formal position (Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary), within the structure that enables NABO to function as an organisation.

Being a Council member is an interesting and informative experience and is only as demanding as the time and energy you have available to be involved.

I have been a Council member for a number of years and I am able to offer my time within the limits that my 'busy' life allows. It is possible to take up and develop a role where you have a personal interest, experience or skills, and develop this to the benefit of NABO and its members. In recent years,

I have been involved in CRT forums involving the Gloucester Ship Canal and the Winter Stoppages Consultation Group.

As a continual cruiser (leisure boater), I am able to feed my experiences and observations from my travels around the inland waterways into Council meetings. I am also able to be supportive and understanding of the needs of other continual cruisers.

NABO Council functions as a friendly, mutually supportive group, who work well together while still able to give alternative challenging views on issues that affect us all as boaters. One of the main rewards for me of being on NABO Council is that I feel part of a group of boaters who care about our canals and rivers. Together we try and influence CRT, EA and other inland waterways organisations to make boating the pleasurable experience that keeps us all involved.

NABO Council has six meetings per year, with modest travel expenses.

Requirements to be a councillor:

- To be a member of NABO;
- To have some experience of boating on the inland waterways;
- To bring personal knowledge and experiences;
- To bring other boater's experiences;
- To bring personal views, where held, about the current and developing issues facing boaters, waterways users, CRT and other organisations that are using or are responsible for activities on the waterways.
- To volunteer in the various roles required to enable NABO to function, providing information and support to members.



Sinkings and strandings on the Bristol Avon

On 15th September, it appears that a fault in the software which operates the EA's vertical sluice gate at Twerton caused it to open suddenly, resulting in a drop of 1.8m in the river level. This caused more than 20 moored boats to sink or become stranded. Fortunately, it appears that no one was harmed. CRT contracted River Canal Rescue to raise and free the sunken and stranded boats.

The Police, Avon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, CRT and BaNES Council attended to protect the boats, provide security and arrange emergency accommodation for the boat owners at the Bath YMCA. The EA has released details of how boat owners can apply for compensation. The boater outreach team at Julian House have been providing practical support and information to boaters affected.

An EA spokesman said: "There was some work underway [on the sluice gate] and until we've absolutely established the exact cause I'm not going to speculate on what went wrong. Clearly something did."

Almost a year earlier, in October 2019, a mechanical fault affected the gearbox on the radial gate at the same location, causing it to lock in an open position, again causing moored boats to sink or become stranded.



An open letter from NABO to Julie Sharman, CRT's Chief Operating Officer

Dear Julie,

At our recent NABO Council meeting, I was asked to contact you to raise two issues of immediate concern. We are naturally delighted to be back on our boats and we are all making extensive use of them. However, our members have raised some safety concerns, supported by my own observations, where we believe that urgent attention from CRT is required.

E-scooters

We are aware of your statement regarding these, but believe that the situation requires urgent action. Personally, I became aware of the problem a few weeks ago on the little Mon & Brec—moored up near Goytre Wharf, we were staggered to watch an e-scooter tearing past us several times, the person wearing headphones playing loud music, totally unaware of his surroundings, riding at well on 20mph.

Just fortunately, there was nobody close on the towpath, but we watched him ride through a bridgehole at this speed—if anyone had been coming the other way, I dread to think what would have happened. I tried to stop him on one of his trips, but with a few expletives, he just dashed past.

I then had a similar experience to this on the K&A. I spoke to the person who was not at all aware that he shouldn't be riding on the towpath but saw no reason why he shouldn't and, likewise, saw no reason why he had to control his speed—he boasted he could easily do 20mph! Members reported similar behaviour recently on the Staffs and Worcs. We appreciate that many boaters have electric cycles but e-scooters should be treated as vehicles and represent a growing safety risk.

Kayaks/ paddle boards/ canoes etc.

Post lockdown, there would appear to be an increasing number of people who are purchasing these, especially the cheap lightweight plastic blow-up canoes and paddleboards.

I would assume that most of these folk are

CRT STATEMENT ON E-SCOOTERS

CRT doesn't specify speed limits on towpaths but asks that primary consideration is given to pedestrians, those who are moving slowly or are stationary and people handling boats. E-scooters are not mentioned in the Towpath Code or in the Better Towpaths for Everyone policy as these were produced before the development of e-scooters. Under CRT's General Canal Bye-laws, their use on towpaths is prohibited in the same way that any vehicles are. CRT has given general permission for all bicycles and any vehicles that are used as mobility aids. It is working with the Department of Transport, local authorities, national bodies and commercial operators to understand if and how e-scooters could be used safely on towpaths. It recognises the obvious safety concerns and will not give permission for e-scooters to be used on towpaths until it is satisfied that people will not be put at risk.

not aware that they need a licence or have never bothered to look at the advice on their use from yourselves or British Canoeing. Indeed, again on the trip-boat, I had a couple insisting that I allowed them to share a lock with me! (I didn't, of course.) I have had the same experience on the Mon & Brec and members are increasingly reporting their concerns elsewhere. These new users seem unaware of the difficulties boaters have in both seeing and navigating around them. There really needs to be a programme of education—no wonder there have been problems in tunnels etc! I fear there is an accident just waiting to happen.

In a similar vein, we have had reports from our members about canoe/kayak clubs organising time-trials on canals and being exceptionally rude to boaters. Are you aware of this?

With very best wishes
Dr M G Rodd FIET CEng.
Chairman, NABO

Helen gets stuck in

Helen Hutt reports on the latest meeting of CRT Elected Boaters' Representatives

There are regular, informal, meetings between Matthew Symonds (MS), CRT's Head of Boating and the elected representatives.

In September, we were online again, with the four private boating representatives; Helen Hutt, Tim Allen, Dave Mendes da Costa and Phil Prettyman, and the representatives for volunteers and boating businesses; representatives for employees. Friends and angling were not present. Here is a synopsis of what we discussed:

Towpath use

A new campaign 'Stay Kind, Slow Down' is ready for launch, mostly online. There was much concern about e-scooters travelling at speed and this is on the agenda for the next full Council meeting in late September. Those present liked the idea of a '4mph, walking speed' limit for all canal users; keep the message simple!

Red diesel consultation

CRT's response, which focuses on offering a rebate for biodiesel users and a partial refund for heating, will be made available to us once completed.

Facilities

Feedback from the working group should be available in about a month; meanwhile tenders for a new refuse contract, with the focus on improving recycling, including food waste, are being evaluated to take effect from next April. Some sites that have been removed are on private

land and CRT is looking for alternatives, which is proving difficult. Areas where there is a general shortage of facilities are being looked at, but there seems little hope of any quick fixes. Fencing around bins to prevent non-boaters fly-tipping apparently doesn't work because boaters leave them unlocked and/or stuff just gets thrown over the top. Where there are problems, boaters are recommended to contact the relevant Regional Director.

Inaccuracies on the facilities map on CRT's website

Regions were due to carry out an audit last year, but some were not completed. MS will investigate adding a 'report' button so that boaters can instantly flag up any inaccuracies; these would then have to be verified by regional staff before changes were implemented. Most helpful are actual photos, with a what3words location embedded.

Unpowered craft

There has been a significant increase this year (British Canoeing reports a 20k increase in membership) and CRT is meeting their rep next week to discuss safety issues, reported time trials and canoes in tunnels; the BC rep needs to experience the problem from a boater's point of view! But again, I don't anticipate any radical changes any time soon.

Lock failures

CRT is still trying to understand why so many locks that are not on the 'at risk' list have failed this year. Vegetation growing in/on

lock gates should be reported, although a volunteer on the Rochdale was apparently told by CRT to stop clearing this. Composite-gate trials are still on-going. Some volunteers with specialist skills are helping with inspections; there is no intention of replacing CRT staff with volunteers.

Harecastle Tunnel booking system

MS will follow up why this can only be done via email. Work is currently being done to gradually expand the online system whenever booking a passage is necessary, and it should be complete within 12 months.

Private boats for hire

The business boating team is trying to keep on top of this (e.g. by doing 'mystery shoppers' on AirBNB etc.) Some are now properly licensed and comply with the hire-boat code. Some, in offline marinas, are outside CRT's jurisdiction.

Offside vegetation

This needs to be tackled, especially on bends, where sight-lines are

impeded, and opposite boat moorings. Specific examples need to be reported. Someone asked if there is any research into the effect of bow thrusters on banks, wash walls, bridge substructures, etc.? To be continued!

Promotion of harmony

Early in the year, there was a lot of goodwill but that now seems to have vanished, with conflict between long-term moorers and visiting boats in particular. There is a meeting next week with K&A towpath rangers.

And finally...

In response to requests from a number of boaters, Tim, Dave, Phil and I have set up a private Facebook group *CRT Boater Reps Forum* where boaters can raise genuine concerns and we reps can share the outcome of our meetings and conversations with CRT. We will trial it until the end of the year to make sure it is not being abused. Posts will be vetted before being published and I sincerely hope it will prove a useful interface.

The CRT Boaters Reps Forum

www.facebook.com/groups/659329964711749

Summary of the July elected representatives' video conference

CRT's elected reps were invited to a Teams meeting with Matthew Symonds. Here is a brief run-down of the topics discussed:

- **Covid 19 update:** CRT supporting 550 vulnerable boaters. Boat movements getting busier following end of lockdown. Hire-boat companies report being sold out for the rest of the 'season.'
- **Towpath maintenance:** Opposing views from boaters; some loved the result when mowing stopped, others hated it. Responsibility

for implementation is regionally devolved so boaters' issues are best addressed locally.

- **Dredging:** MS repeated a request to boaters to 'let us know where'. Peak Forest particularly bad at the moment, despite recent dredging operations.
- **Recent spate of lock beam failures:** Most of them were already on the 'to be replaced' list, but obviously their condition was worse than thought. MS felt the inspection regime was not necessarily at fault. Inspection team has started to use a resistograph, which can measure the condition of the wood internally. Some may be replaced by composite materials. Also laser measurement of all locks (not just problem ones) to be carried out in due time.

Now it's your turn...

The Annual General Meeting of the National Association of Boat Owners

Nominations must reach us by October 3rd 2020

Please send the General Secretary any **Resolutions** you wish put before the AGM meeting with the names of proposer and seconder by October 3rd 2020.

Please send to:
gen.sec@nabo.org.uk
 or by post to:
 MARK TIZARD
 20 Oak Grove, Hertford,
 SG13 8AT

Now is the time for you to join the dedicated souls that make up NABO Council and stand for election for 2020–2021, so you can have even more say in what we do.

The Council meets around seven times per year and the work is rewarding and interesting ... and occasionally frustrating. You'll learn what goes on behind the scenes and make new friends into the bargain. If you feel you might be out of your depth, worry not; one of us will act as your mentor to help you with the few formalities.

Don't be shy!

Nominations

Please complete the nomination form, photocopy it if you would rather keep your NABO News intact, and then return it to Mark Tizard, General Secretary, by **3rd October 2020**.

Resolutions

Please send the General Secretary any resolutions you wish put before the AGM meeting with the names of proposer and seconder by **3rd October, 2020**.

Due to the on-going Covid-19 restrictions, the AGM will be a virtual meeting to deal with the Association's business. Please email gensec@nabo.org.uk for details of how to take part in the meeting

In relation to nominations, the NABO Constitution states:-

Only full members are eligible to be nominated for election to, or to be members of, the Council.

Any member seeking election or re-election to the Council who is, or has at any time in the previous 12 months, held any position of influence or authority in any organization which is involved with the inland waterways, or has any personal interest which is likely to affect their dealings with outside bodies on behalf of the Association, shall declare their interest at the time of being nominated for the Council.

Any member seeking election or re-election to the Council shall declare the full circumstances and current status at the time of being nominated for the Council if he or she is, or has been at any time in the previous six years:

- convicted of any criminal offence,
- involved in or threatened with litigation,
- involved in or threatened with formal insolvency proceedings,
- or the subject of a formal inquiry.

Nomination form for the NABO Council

Nominee

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Email:

Boat name:

Signature and Date:

Proposer*

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Secunder

Name:

Address:

Tel:

In 80 words or less, please tell members why they should elect you to NABO Council:

Any declarations required by the Constitution:

Send to: MARK TIZARD, gen.sec@nabo.org.uk or 20 Oak Grove, Hertford, SG13 8AT

*If you don't have anyone to propose and second you, don't worry, just phone one of the Council members and we can sort that out for you.

Please use the space on the nomination form for necessary declarations, or include an attached sheet.

Shared boating

Howard Anguish, Peter Fellows and Linda French are three adherents of this form of boat ownership.

In this and the next issue, they describe their experiences of the different ways in which it can be organised.

It might seem a little perverse to include an article on shared boating in a magazine that is read by people who are already boat owners. But this way of boating is increasingly being considered by owners who want to reduce their financial commitments, especially if they want to spend only a few weeks each year on the waterways.

Part 1. Shared ownerships—What's that all about?

NABO's Shared Ownership Rep., **Howard Anguish**, on different types of schemes and his involvement in boat-share syndicates for over 21 years.

Those of us who are growing long in the tooth in the boating scene have recently seen an upsurge in a new breed of boat owners, boaters who, for whatever reason, have decided to share their boating experience with a group of like-minded owners, rather than take the plunge and buy a boat outright. I refer, of course, to 'Shared Boat Owners'; a term which is now bandied about by boating enthusiasts without sometimes understanding what is entailed in this rapidly growing aspect of the waterway scene.

One thing I think needs saying right at the outset is that shared ownership is **not timeshare!** Timeshare is a totally different concept with no element of 'ownership' in a boat; rather a holiday experience is purchased for a period of one or more weeks each year and that is the end of the matter. The boat, or

flat in Marbella etc., remains in the ownership of a company which also manages the whole holiday experience.

Shared ownership, however, is as it describes, the total ownership of a specific boat, shared between a small syndicate of boating enthusiasts, who, together, have exclusive right to use the boat, and who make all decisions about how the boat is maintained and where it is based—in fact every aspect of running and maintaining it. One model is to employ the services of a management company to look after the routine administration and maintenance of the boat, for which a fee is charged. Other boats are run completely self-managed by the syndicate, usually by a small group of owners who take on the various necessary tasks. In fact, for the first ten years of our involvement in shared ownerships, we were part of a managed scheme, but in 2010 we decided as a syndicate to run the boat ourselves—a decision which has worked out very well with no regrets, and of course, a significant saving in outgoings.

I should say right away that there are a number of variations of the many shared ownership schemes within this broad concept, and whether to buy into either a managed scheme or a self-managed scheme is a purely personal decision with no preference for either method—both systems work well. It is of course necessary for any boat to have a carefully worked out agreement, which is agreed by all owners,



'Somnia' our first boat—Whaley Bridge 2002
'Winthorpe' our current boat. Staffs & Worcs 2012

setting down the rights and obligations of each shareholder, forming the basis of how the boat is managed.

My wife and I have been enthusiastic owners, using this way of boating since 1999, starting off with a share in a boat launched in that year—Somnia—and moving to newer boats over the last 21 years, culminating in our present boat Winthorpe, built in Poland in 2008. The following is very much slanted to our own experience and I'm sure owners in other schemes will spot the differences—other shared ownerships schemes are available!

Why would anybody want to share a boat rather than own it outright?

There are as many reasons as owners, but I think our experience is typical of many shared owners.

Many people have been hiring boats for many years, so already have

a love and knowledge of the canals and rivers, and, in our case, having hired boats for a number of years, we had decided many years ago that, because of work constraints, we couldn't justify buying a boat outright, knowing that we wouldn't be able to use it for more than a couple of weeks in the year.

Our long-term plan was that, when we approached retirement, we would buy a boat and set off into the wide blue yonder. Some eight or nine years before retiring, we investigated various possibilities and concluded that to buy a share would be an economical alternative to hiring until that magic day when we would be ready to buy our own boat and set off along the cut. This proved to be accurate and we found the savings, as opposed to hiring, were significant. As the time to retire approached, we gradually changed our opinion and eventually decided that, although we

Further information on shared ownership
www.thefitoutpontoon.co.uk/boat-buying-guide/share-boats

www.ournarrowboat.co.uk

www.boatshare4u.co.uk

There is a YouTube video that gives a fairly comprehensive outline of what's involved:

'Cruising the Cut' vlog episode 81—Share and Share Alike at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kiw1JVtyRM

There is a shared narrowboat owners group at www.facebook.com/groups/1119638451491774

Boat shares for sale, either by private syndicates or managed by four companies, are advertised at

www.boatshare.co.uk

There is a virtual boat share show at boatshare4u.co.uk/vbss.asp

could buy a boat of our own, we preferred to buy another share in our boat when it became available and this allowed us to use the saved capital sum for other things. This worked out very well and, at one stage in boat ownership, we found having two shares in a boat gave us at least six to eight weeks' boating each year, which we considered a compromise that would allow us to do some of the other things we wanted when we had the time.

Of course, this type of boating doesn't suit everyone, so what are the pros and cons of shared ownership? We are all aware that, like many things in life, anything to do with boating frequently involves an element of compromise. Ideally, we would like a Rolls Royce of a boat, with all our personal fads and fancies taken into account, and of course this boat should be cheap. In reality, we have to sacrifice some things in order to achieve others. In shared ownership, you have the opportunity to own a piece of a high specification, quality-built boat, well-equipped, at a price that is within the reach of most people. The number of owners of a particular boat can vary from scheme to scheme, but it is safe to say that the norm is 12 shares per boat. So, taking current prices for building a high specification, 57-foot, four-six berth boat at around £120,000, each brand new twelfth share can cost roughly £10,000. Additionally, the cost of any repairs, additions or modifications to the boat is also divided by 12, making it much easier to indulge in upgrading and titivation! A share is yours for life or until you wish to sell, and over the last ten years or so, shares have held their prices very well. So, when you do decide to sell the share there is a ready market and shares are quickly snapped up with a welcome return

of a proportion of your initial outlay.

On one level, joining such a scheme is like joining a club where one can find people with a common interest, although this aspect is relatively low-key and joining in or not is very much a personal thing. There are a couple of websites where those who wish may exchange views and ask for guidance, knowing that they are speaking to likeminded people. Our annual meeting is held in the autumn when our group of owners get together in a centrally located hotel and, in our case, we normally meet for a meal prior to the meeting at which all aspects of the running of the boat are discussed. Decisions are made with regard to what maintenance and renovation work should be carried out over the winter, and where the boat will be based for the following year. The payment for this work is taken from a fund to which all owners contribute each year. This fund is rather unfortunately called 'the sinking fund'!

We have a booking scheme for holidays in the forthcoming year. Unlike hire-boats, our boat is in use throughout the year and individual holiday requirements differ widely. The booking system has been devised which entails fairness, allowing all owners a priority of choice which varies from year to year. The system works very well but is quite complicated to describe in a few words!

So, to sum up this brief description of shared ownership, it certainly doesn't suit everyone, but for those who don't wish to commit to boating at the exclusion of other interests and hobbies, and as a 'halfway house' between hiring and owning, it is hard to beat. Hilary and I certainly have no regrets and, after 21 years, we think we've found an ideal way to enjoy the waterways while still being able to enjoy other things, now that we are both retired.

Tidy Towpaths?

All the recent comments on social media about the absence of towpath vegetation management during the Covid lockdown are not new. Those who wanted to see less cutting were also vocal in 1999, when the following poem was sent to NABO News by Jan Eaton.

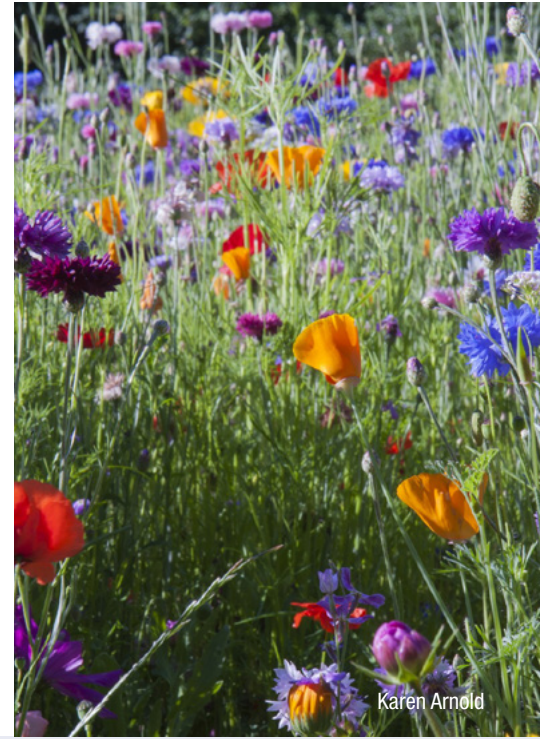
*After all the rain, everything looks pretty green
But not where BW's rippers have been
Meadow sweet, sorrel and purple mallow
All cut down, how very callow*

*BW, what is your reason?
To destroy in the midst of their season
The beautiful plants that please the eye
And the nettles that please the butterfly*

*It gets worse: when these plants are mown
Into the canal they're thrown
BW, this has to stop
We now have bindweed around our prop.*

*Oh, thank goodness, an uncut stretch
I can see some tufted vetch
Some foxgloves and forget-me-nots
And yellow monkey flowers with spots*

*The rare corn cockle, what a treat
Even the humble daisy, smelling sweet
Again, I'm full of admiration
For the beauty of God's creation.*



Karen Arnold

During this summer, member, Martin Gilding, offered NABO his own perspective:

"CRT should not lose sight of their prime responsibility, which I believe is to maintain the navigable waterways of the UK. In order to do that, they need to properly control vegetation in the waterway corridor. This requires management to retain freedom of passage (including sight-lines) along the waterway corridor and its structural integrity. The waterway corridor includes not only the water but also the towpath. That is not to say that there are no places where

vegetation can be allowed to flourish unhindered but, in my view, the vegetation should always be managed with freedom of passage in mind. CRT should probably be reminded that if maintenance is neglected to the extent that a safety hazard arises, they could find themselves facing a claim for enormous damages. So management of vegetation should also have safety as a major consideration. Pretty flowers are good to look at, but no consolation if you are looking at them from ground (or even water) level, with broken bones because the flowers/plants are obstructing the waterway corridor."

Spin and reality

As CRT are beginning to lose the maintenance battle **Mark Tizard** asks if it's now the time for to stop the constant PR spin

When navigation restarted, I thought we'd need to take account of potential water shortages when planning our cruising routes. Little did we realise that infrastructure failures were going to have a far greater influence.

The latest Boaters Update says: *'As we might have predicted, despite our best efforts, the combined impact of the extensive winter flooding, the long spring dry spell, and the 2-3 months with very few boat movements and hence almost no regular operation of paddles, locks... ..has led to an increased number of asset failures, leading to unplanned restrictions on cruising in some places.'* This begs the question: who was doing the predicting? Surely not those walking the towpath, as they were

nearly all fur-
loughed. What best efforts? Surely not those working from home. It must refer to the eyes and ears of those continuous cruisers who have, in effect, become the first line of CRT's maintenance regime. A boater posted this picture of Welford lock on social media with a warning that it looked like it was on its last legs. A few days later, there was a stoppage notice

quoting 'unexpected maintenance'. Unexpected, really!

There has been a barrage of stoppage notices in recent weeks and seven gate or heel post failures on the southern Grand Union alone. These were not caused by rain or dry weather; not even by lack of paddle movement. These are failures that have taken many non-Covid months of non-detection to develop. We need to move from just planned winter stoppages to year round inspection and maintenance, with a change to the maintenance regime that currently seems to hope that things don't break despite 'our best efforts.'

But my recent cruising experience suggests that some boaters are not without blame. The numbers who care little for the canal infrastructure or environment continues to rise. Some are happy to leave paddles up or gates open, resulting in drained pounds. It's becoming more common to discover blocked or filthy Elsans. We need to educate all users (and authorities) that the system is precious and needs preserving. It's the great diversity of boats and their owners that has always made the canals so welcoming and interesting, and this needs to be encouraged if CRT is to have any chance of renewing its grant. We need stronger enforcement and education for the few who, for example, decide to refit their boat on the towpath, leaving behind the unwanted contents, or those who think nothing of mooring on lock landings or service points. Extra signage doesn't work.

Welford lock a few days before a stoppage notice quoting 'unexpected maintenance'.
Photo: Ian Clipstone



A rose by any other name...

Peter Fellows has attempted to group the extraordinary diversity of nearly 800 boat names into nine categories.

Part 1: The long wait

Of the 36,000 or so boats that are registered on the UK's inland waterways, the vast majority of owners choose a name that is something innocuous, such as reflecting an aspect of nature (Kingfisher, Willow, Misty Dawn etc.) or a name of someone special to them, almost always female (Lady Christine, Jenny B, Rosie etc.). But there is a sizeable minority who choose a name to make a statement of some kind and, in doing so, reveal something of their character or background. In this and following articles, I've collated real names of UK-registered boats into different themes.

Many owners have to wait a long time before they are able to buy a boat and some reflect this in their boat's name

'Bout Time, A Boat Time, Time For Us, After Kids, After Work, Last Call, Last Chance, Last Hurrah.

...or age

Golden Oldie, Recycled Teenagers, Empty Nesters, Out to Pasture, Adventure Before Dementia, Diazepam, Vintage Whine, Midlife Cruises, Over 40, Fifty Something, Fifty-Five & Out, His Last Toy, Olde Boy's Toy.

The expense...

For some, buying a boat is one of their largest payouts and they want people to know this, often using a pun

Costa Lotta, Money Pit, Eeuwbaawattwut?, Beyond Our Means, Blew Too Much, Blown Income, Boatrupt, Over Limit, Over the Edge, Gone Overboard, Over Indulgence, Blue Our Budget, Budget Bender, Over Budget, Scintuss, Empty Wallet, Penny Less, M.T. Pockets, Miss My Money, Spent It, In D Red, In Debt, Overdrawn, In Deeper, N 2 Deep, King's Ransom, Robyn-Me-Blind, Stung Again.

...although a few do not begrudge the cost
Expensive Therapy, Justified Expense.

For some owners, the source of the money is important enough to be the boat name...

Banker Boat, Banknote, Accrued Interest, Float a Loan, Second Mortgage, R-Inheritance, Tooth Ferry, Legacy, Windfall, Daddy's Money, Son's College Funds, Laundered Money, Receivership, Tax-Shelter, Profit Margin, Blown Assets.

...but some owners want to show, perhaps ironically, that the cost is no big deal to them.

It's Only Money, Petty Cash, Paid For, Pocket Change, Loose Change, It's Worth It, Just-A-Nutter Payment, Y Knot, Y Worry, Y-Ask-Y.

When owners have actually managed to buy their boats, they sometimes express their surprise using the boat name

Pinch Me, Somebody Slap Me, O Yes!, Smine, Mine—All Mine, Iownher, Reely Mine, Knot Yours, Finally Ours, Weedidit, Wegonen-Dunnit, Atsa Ma Boat, Bragging Rights, Impossible Dream, Quit Wishing, My Answered Prayer, Imagine That, Payedforit, Doneowen, Knot 4 Sail, Knot Stolen.



It's all in red and white

More nonsense on diesel duty

David Fletcher expresses his exasperation

In the March 2020 budget, the Chancellor made reference to the tax on red diesel, basically pushing boating towards the use of white diesel.

This is on environmental grounds, but it does follow the requirement of the judgement of the European Courts. Now we have a consultation from HM Treasury on this, and NABO will respond in late September.

We will ask again that inland waterways are retained on the list of uses of red diesel, given that we have a system that works, the amounts involved are insignificant in terms of environmental issues, and we are leaving the EU.

The consultation is helpful in clarifying some issues, if we were to change to white diesel.

First, it is apparent that hire-boats will be classified with private boats and, whatever happens, they will use the same propulsion fuel, white or red. So the bulk of diesel supplied over the marina waterfront and by fuel-boats will still be of one type. The only boats that will be classified as commercial and still use red diesel, if the rest change to white, are maintenance craft, hotel boats, fishing boats and own-use fuel boats. Some boats using diesel for heating will be able to use red diesel, but we have to be careful about the wording. They say: "It is the government's intention that people whose primary, or often their only, place of residence is their boat (which has a permanent mooring), will remain entitled to use red diesel." This is Treasury speak, not towpath speak. What is a per-

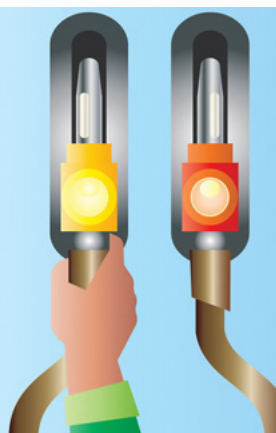
manent mooring? Do they mean houseboats only? Discuss.

Secondly, HRMC is not expecting private boaters to clean their tanks just to effect any change to white diesel. It is accepted that there will be a legacy of red dye in the systems.

Thirdly, they accept that having twin tanks is not universally feasible and that boaters will in general have one fuel. They are proposing that there is a rebate on white diesel used for heating. There are complicated proposals on the rate of duty and VAT on use for heating.

Some other issues that we have to consider:

- Risk of theft of white diesel;
- Pricing of white diesel—marina vs supermarket and unintended consequences;
- Diversion of rebated white diesel to propulsion or road use. It is going to happen and how will this be managed? This is why we have red diesel. Perverse?
- The very low volume of diesel used on the waterways. The change from red to white will achieve nothing in efficiency savings or for the environment. So why do it?
- How will the supply of red diesel for commercial craft be handled?
- Understanding fuel duty and VAT: will there be a cost increase for boaters for propulsion fuels? Will the 60/40 rule continue and can liveboards specify other percentages?
- What is the impact on suppliers—e.g. security, paperwork, cash-flow and liability?
- The use of biofuels on the water-



ways is troublesome. The Dept. for Transport has ignored the problems and this will get much worse with white diesel. We had found a way to make it work with fame-free red.

- How do we handle using up the 'last tank-full' of red by boaters and suppliers?

So the message on this is (still)

not to do anything yet. We will fight for the status quo and, of course, continue to object to the changes, as we have done for more than 15 years. The Government is saying that this will not come in until 2022, but we know that virus issues and Brexit are more pressing. Perhaps they will forget. We can still hope. We need a bit more joy at the moment.

Mark Tizard adds:

Small suppliers, like coal-boats, or marinas with non-hire fleets, will surely just supply one colour, presumably white.

Coal-boats, if they can afford it, will also switch to white, I presume. At the moment, the risk of declaration is with the boater, as long as they sign, but the new scheme passes the risk to the supplier. They have to buy at 100% duty and claim

back—they will want a fixed split or no split to simplify this claim. Many will not want to take the risk and the higher upfront costs involved and will stop supplying.

Either way, boating costs will increase, even if you have been declaring on a 60/40 basis. The likely outcome is that there will be a large increase in boaters providing their own fuel via Jerry cans, with the resultant pollution risks.

Fuel for solid-fuel stoves

DEFRA has published its intentions over solid fuels, coal and wood, which are proposed to become the Air Quality (Domestic Solid Fuels Standards) (England) Regulations 2020, coming into force on 1st May 2021. The legislation will need to be debated in both Houses of Parliament before it comes into force, but the dates for these debates are yet to be confirmed. The Regulations will phase out the supply of traditional house coal for domestic combustion and wet wood sold in units of up to 2m³, and introduce sulphur and smoke emission limits for manufactured solid fuels. The changes will be phased in between 2021 and 2023, with sales of small volumes of wet wood being phased out by 2022 and sales of traditional house coal by 2023. Stoves are not banned and these policies do not seek to prevent their installation or use. The intention is to ensure that people move away from burning more polluting fuels to less polluting fuels, from burning wet wood to burning dry wood and from traditional house coal to smokeless coal and low-sulphur manufactured solid fuels.

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/air-quality-using-cleaner-fuels-for-domestic-burning/outcome/summary-of-responses-and-government-response.



TECHIE'S



CORNER

Aspects of boat design, construction, equipment, facilities or maintenance

The mystery of gas testing

David Fletcher delves into the dark arts of manometry and bubble testers



One of two NABO Councillors on BSS committees, David Fletcher chairs the Technical Committee, and so is uniquely placed to explain the inner workings of the BSS gas tightness test.

The gas test for your BSS examination is shrouded in secrecy. The examiner sits hunched over a contraction of U-tube and rubber pipes and, after some delay, then reveals the result of the mystery. About a quarter of examinations result in a failure and an unknown other number

ried out over 15 minutes might find it, but that is not the specified test. Even new cookers have some very slight leakage, but this is judged to be safe and they will pass the examination test. The volume of the gas system, length of pipe, length of boat etc., has an impact on this, because the pressure in a larger system will take longer to reduce if there is a leak. Also, if the boat has multiple devices, cooker, water heater, central heating, these also add to the leakage. So the pressure drop criterion is a compromise of all this. But we know from long experience that when an examiner sees a pressure drop, there is a leak somewhere, which is better fixed than not.

pass after the examiner finds a small weep, and nips it up in time for the examination to be called a pass. Boaters cannot really do this manometer test themselves, but a near equivalent has been around for more than 20 years. It is the Alde bubble tester.

A bubble tester is a simple device fitted in the pipework close to the regulator. The device has a transparent chamber containing a fluid and a 'button' which, when pressed, diverts the flow of gas through the chamber. If a leak is present anywhere downstream in the pipework, hoses, appliances or joints, bubbles will be visible in the chamber. The advantage of this is that the boater can do this at any time without tools and can also pre-test for the BSS examination.

For 20 years, the examination has specified the two tests as equivalent. The manometer test checks the locked-in pressure of the gas and 'no discernible pressure drop' is allowed over five minutes. It does not mean that there is no leak at all, but just that any leak is so small it cannot be detected in five minutes. A test car-

ried out over 15 minutes might find it, but that is not the specified test. Even new cookers have some very slight leakage, but this is judged to be safe and they will pass the examination test. The volume of the gas system, length of pipe, length of boat etc., has an impact on this, because the pressure in a larger system will take longer to reduce if there is a leak. Also, if the boat has multiple devices, cooker, water heater, central heating, these also add to the leakage. So the pressure drop criterion is a compromise of all this. But we know from long experience that when an examiner sees a pressure drop, there is a leak somewhere, which is better fixed than not.

The bubble tester is different because, by counting bubbles, you are measuring actual gas leakage flow, so it is independent of the volume of the boat gas system. If only a small leak is present, it takes some tens of seconds for the first bubble to form, because some downstream pressure loss is required. Then the number of bubbles over, say, 60 seconds reflects the actual leakage. The criterion for the BSS is zero bubbles over this period. You will see that for both tests the time span is critical. The longer the duration of the test, the more onerous it becomes. All boats will see some leakage if you wait long enough!

The current model of the Alde bubble tester has been around since 2008 and was introduced from the caravan world. The maker's instructions for use have changed over the years, partly as a result of the information exchange with the BBS. Originally, the requirement was for testing over ten seconds, and this was later amended to 60 seconds. Boaters have known for a long time that the bubble test and manometer tests were not exactly aligned. It was possible for a boat to fail a bubble

test and then pass a retest with a manometer.

BSS have been researching this and it transpires that for the bubble test (with a 'no bubble' criterion) ten seconds is generally not long enough (it will not find a small leak), and 60 seconds is too long. So what is appropriate?

Enter the dark world of the Recreational Craft Directive (RCD), British and International standards, and the most secret world of Gas Safe Engineers. There is a plethora of references for testing, which help, but these are not all fully appropriate. The BSS is not a design house and has to take a rounded view of risk, take advice from professional bodies, and set a service test that is simple and repeatable to implement. But this service test is not the same as the system certification test for a new house build or a landlord test.

The BSS Technical Committee has been working on this conundrum for the last five years, reviewing the fundamental research of the BSS office, drawing on the long experience of examiners and gas safety engineers, and looking at the complexity of Gas Safe and RCD. It has been one of the longest running technical challenges in the history of the BSS. Fortunately, it is nearing completion with a general revision of the instructions to examiners for testing using both manometers and bubble testers. Considerable rig testing has been done to ensure that the tests are equivalent and to understand the actual leakage that may be present when an examination is declared a 'Pass'.

From next year, the test will be standardised at two minutes, which in the industry is the generally accepted period, with the same no discernible pressure drop for the manometer and a very few bubbles allowed for the bubble tester,

We know from long experience that when an examiner sees a pressure drop, there is a leak somewhere.

depending on the fuel. Only the current model 4071 Alde tester can be used for this. If you have an older model, this can be used for the examination for a while, but the old criterion of one minute and zero bubbles applies. This is because the manufacturing tolerance of the old models are simply not available. Unfortunately, the connections for the old and new models do not match, so it needs piping changes. Examiners will be trained on the revised procedures in the coming months and they can then use the updated procedures.

If you are a liveaboard, you know that the UK gas regulations apply to the boat, so called 'in scope'. This means that, for a manometer test, a Gas Safe qualified person must do the test, or you have a bubble tester. The test is a BSS test, not the Gas Safe test, and this has caused some confusion in the past. So, for a liveaboard, having a bubble tester has this additional advantage. But fitting a bubble tester on a liveaboard boat needs a Gas Safe engineer, so next time one comes to



A manometer, of an old fashioned pattern but still a common way for a Gas Safe BSS inspector to perform the gas tightness test.

In a forward gas locker, looking at the leak detector may involve some interesting yoga.

your boat, you may as well have one fitted.

Gas locker yoga

But, bubble testers cannot go anywhere; there needs to be good access.

By way of example, a narrowboat may have a forward gas locker and looking at the leak detector may involve some interesting yoga to see the fluid, press the button and shine a torch for two minutes plus, to do the test. And the examiner has to be happy with this too. If your boat has a cruiser-stern layout with a stern gas locker and a rear galley, the access to the device may be somewhat

Alde bubble tester
Note: the fittings are metric and require adaptors for the more usual imperial gas fittings used on narrow boat gas systems.



easier. So fitting is important. If there are multiple appliances, a boat may run up against a limit on the loading of the gas system, so these more complex boats might need a bypass fitting to the bubble tester to avoid gas starvation at the burners.

If your boat is 'in scope' of the UK gas regulations, please remember that gas-related work can only be carried out by a certified individual. Performing DIY gas work on an 'in scope' boat is illegal and prosecutions by the Health and Safety Executive do happen.

To close, a few other points:

- Everybody should use competent tradespeople for gas systems to be sure that the required standards are adhered to.
 - For new-builds, RCD and British or European standards and procedures apply to gas testing, which are different to the BSS examination. This also applies to modified gas systems on old boats.
 - If an annual landlord certificate is required (for hire or tenanted boats), this is additional to the BSS examination, and Gas Safe testing rules apply.
 - Examiners are nervous about using a boater's bubble tester that is not calibrated in the same way as their own manometer. If the bubble tester is not in 'as new' condition, fitted correctly with access, and filled with the right fluid, they may refuse to use it.
- So now you know that a passed gas test is not proof of zero leakage, because that is impractical. Therefore a boat requires some ventilation so that there is air change going on. Half of private boats fail the advisory ventilation check. Please explain why the prudent boater would not comply with the recommended ventilation requirement? It beats me.

Rewind

Issue No 5, 2005

Howard Anguish explores NABO News from 15 years ago

There's a mixed bag to choose from in this issue, with interesting reports about the 'Cruise in Company' on the Tidal Severn, together with continuing arguments with British Waterways about licence fees.

Tidal Severn Cruise. The Chairman makes it clear at the outset that all praise should go to Carole (his wife and NABO secretary) who had done a marvellous job organising the event in such detail. Participants were so grateful that Carole received many gifts as tokens of thanks including a book called 'Emergencies at Sea'. I wonder what they were trying to tell her!

A total of twelve narrowboats made the trip without any problems, travelling on three separate tides, all meeting up in Bristol for a social evening, with everyone joining in with food preparation and fun and games, with a session of life-ring tossing!

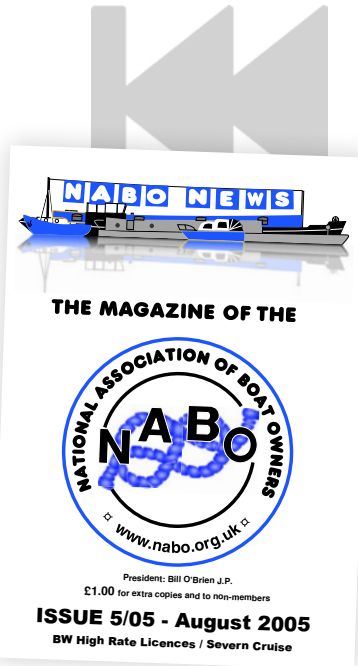
British Waterways licence arguments continued with a proposal from them to change the name of the Business Rate to High Rate, so they could encompass all shared boats (private owned and commercially managed) and also continuous cruisers on the basis of increased wear and tear these vessels were supposed to cause. If passed, this proposal could have meant an increase in the annual licence fee for a continuous cruiser of 147%! Thank goodness that someone saw sense and the proposal fell through.

Going Boating—take a suit. Following on from a picture of BW Chairman, Robin Evans, and colleagues dining in the Foxton locks Inn—a BW pub partnership acquisi-

tion—a Black Buoy Cruising Club member paid a visit and reported: "We were totally ignored on several occasions. All the other customers were dressed in collars and ties, suits etc. and we were dressed in casual gear." It seems that the pub management had let it be known that they only "wanted the best customers".

A second article from **Stuart Sampson** continues the saga of making the film 'A Voyage between Two Seas'. One extract may give a flavour of the complexities of making a simple documentary: the Straight Mile in Burnley can take just 10 to 15 minutes, but because the camera can flatten out such an engineering feat, a high viewpoint must be sought. So they had arranged for a hoist and hydraulic platform so that the cameraman could look down on them as they crossed. Unfortunately it didn't turn up on time so they had to waste time looking for a suitable high building before the hoist eventually arrived.

Richard Carpenter, NABO Hon. Sec. raises an issue in the letters section about the difficulties of access at swing bridges for boats that are single-handed. He mentions that he spent some time doing basic research over two relaxing days, sitting and observing at a swing bridge near his home, and noticed a significant proportion of boaters, around 30%, were single-handed and asks for NABO to look again at this issue.



NABO News back issues are available online at nabo.org.uk/index.php/reference/nn-back-issues-2

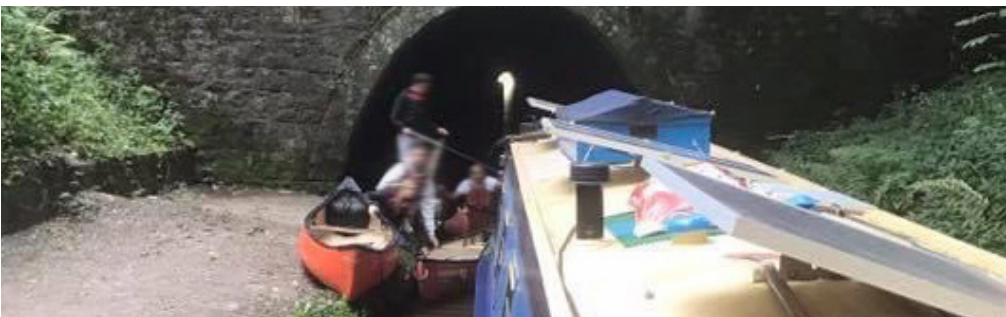
Letters to the Editor

Opinions expressed here are independent of NABO policy and statements made have not been verified as true

Canoeists in Chirk tunnel

As we entered Chirk tunnel we came across a small number of canoeists, led by an incompetent fool who thought it was totally acceptable to send the group through the tunnel without lights and, if that wasn't bad enough, he told us that some of the group were vulnerable people! When I explained his actions could get someone killed or seriously injured he just stood like a plonker with his thumb up.

Pete Hemmings



Boaters' facilities

I think that it is essential that CRT continues to provide basic facilities (I regard these as sensibly spaced Elsan disposal, rubbish disposal and water-points). Although these are often available at boatyards/marinas, these establishments commonly have limited opening hours and access; also in some more off-the-beaten-track waterways, there are no facilities other than those provided by CRT. I have always regarded these basic facilities as part of what I expect CRT to provide—they (and previously BW) have certainly done so ever since I started boating 40 years ago. However, at that time, pumpouts were few and far between and only at boatyards/marinas—I do not recall ever seeing a BW pumpout in the early years of my boating, so there is not a strong case for CRT to provide them. In any case,

pumpouts are less of a problem, I think, because holding tanks have a much greater capacity than Elsans (even with spare tanks), so it is easier to plan for a pumpout at a suitable time and place; an emergency Elsan could always be carried. So, in my view, if CRT wishes to cease provision of pumpout stations, I would not disagree. But I would disagree strongly if they were to suggest that they should no longer provide those basic facilities that I mentioned above. I hope these comments are useful. Keep up the good work.

Martin Gilding

Pete Hemmings uses the bulk of his narrow boat to make plain his views on canoeing in tunnels

Photo: Pete Hemmings

Vegetation management

I have seen calls on social media for this to be scaled back to encourage wildlife, some discussions becoming quite heated. There are also boaters campaigning for this, which I find strange. My personal opinion is that the current regime should be maintained or increased where funding permits. There is ample facility for wildlife in and along hedgerows and the dry side of the towpath. The wet side should be cut and kept cut to ensure safe set down and pick up for crew, mooring, the need to tie up in an emergency etc. There can be many trip hazards hidden by long grass, holes, broken glass the inevitable dog

Techies' Corner Q&A

I would like your technical expert to give his views on the appropriate type of fire extinguishers that can be safely used on boat fires. I am aware that BS5306 does not recommend powder extinguishers for indoor use in confined spaces, due to toxicity and visibility risks, and I also understand that the residue is difficult to clear up and is corrosive. Are foam fire extinguishers the preferred choice? Is it time for the BSS to be reviewed in the light of published guidance?

Stephen Peters

Tony Brooks replies

I have never agreed to act as NABO's technical expert on BSS matters or for the more esoteric areas of boating. I would suggest that you direct your question to the BSS office and discuss it with a qualified fire engineer.

My views are as follows: The powder is non-

toxic but inhaling large amounts may have an effect on the lungs. However, onboard fire extinguishers are intended to be used to allow the boat to be evacuated in the case of a fire, not to actually fight the fire. If you have two means of exit you may not need to use an extinguisher at all.

Using a water extinguisher on a fire involving mains electrics or liquid fuels could easily kill you or make the fire even worse. Foam is also likely to be dangerous around mains electricity, and both create a soggy wet mess. Halon gas is now known to be too dangerous to the atmosphere and to the human body to use in extinguishers, as is carbon tetrafluoride. CO2 will definitely asphyxiate you in a confined space.

Dry powder is the only type of extinguisher that can be more or less safely used on any likely boat fire, without wasting time to assess the type of fire and finding a suitable extinguisher. This is why it is in almost universal use.

waste to name the most likely. Seeds will soon turn into saplings, particularly ash, which will, if left unchecked, soon start to damage banks, brickwork etc. One only has to look at the many places along the cut where neglecting to remove these has caused serious damage to the structure of canals.

After campaigning for years to have a vegetation management plan, it seems a bit backward to undo that work and let the banks turn into a jungle again.

Peter Caswell

Geoffery Remembered

Geoffery's death has brought me much sadness but also many happy memories. Geoff was one of the first boaters I met when I moved aboard 30 years ago on the Kennet and Avon. His guidance on matters BW was invaluable and his unfailingly polite but firm way of dealing with confrontational bureaucracy an inspiration. He would often triumph through the unanswerable tactic of ascerbic humour.

Another inspiration was that of his historic boat, Bristol, still, to my mind, one of the most elegant

I name this boat ...

If you have spotted a boat name that made you smile, please let me have a photo to use in future issues. Here's one from Brian Holt.



working boat conversions around, and helping him to get moving again on the often shallow pounds of the western K and A provided me with the adage 'nobody's been stuck for ever'. Almost directly as a result of his example I have been the proud owner of two working boats. He is sorely missed.

Chris Pink



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