

ALERT

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A NEW ERA

**THE LAUNCH OF THE CANAL AND RIVER TRUST.
 A FORWARD BY AWCC CHAIRMAN PAUL LE BLIQUE**

The year of 1963

was a cornerstone in the life of the inland waterways as a Transport Act, passed during the previous year had paved the way for a new body to take over the management of the system. The British Waterways Board, later shortened to B.W. of course, inherited a tired and dilapidated system that had been under resourced for years along with a carrying fleet of similarly afflicted boats.

I had already enjoyed the world of canals, which may seem odd for a lad brought up on the Hampshire Downlands but the scouting movement and a grandmother who lived near the G.U. in Buckinghamshire provided the route to a world which still holds the same interests as those early days of exploration. The full meaning of the change to B.W.B. was lost on me at the time, the Great Train Robbery probably caught my attention, but looking back I realise just what B.W. has achieved during its time as guardian of our waterways. I recalled earlier the dreadful condition of the waterways in 1963 and I believe we should recognise and thank B.W. for improving and popularising the system that has become the waterways we enjoy today.

Fast forward

nearly half a century and B.W. has, in its turn, handed the mantle to the Canal and River Trust to improve, protect and provide a waterway environment for all to enjoy. AWCC has, over that same half century, ensured that the interests of the club boater has been kept in the minds of those able to influence and guide the recreational use of the waterways. The Association has played its part in the transition to CRT by responding fully to all consultation documents and partaking in user group meetings at all levels of waterway management. Senior officers in B.W. and D.E.F.R.A. have complemented AWCC for the thoughtful, balanced and sometimes penetrating responses to process of change. AWCC will ensure that navigation remains at the core of a network that is available for all to enjoy. I believe that CRT is a superb opportunity for our waterways; we should recognise the achievement that is its creation.

For myself, I look forward to the inaugural meeting of the CRT, Navigation Advisory Group, NAG, on Fri 21st September. The group, one of several specialist advisory panels, will concentrate on all aspects of navigation on CRT canals and rivers.

EDITOR

Many thanks to all those who said they enjoyed reading the last issue of ALERT. I hope this one has something to interest you.

The Newsletter is your way of letting other clubs up and down the land know what you are doing. I am still hoping that someone will send me an article about some of the terrific people who make the AWCC work. Those who go the extra mile for their fellow boater, you know who they are.

Thanks must go to all those people who have agreed to take ALERT in electronic format, you are saving the Association a fortune in postage and printing costs. However please be kind enough to print a copy off to hang on the club notice board so those who don't have computers can still get to see what is happening elsewhere on the club boater scene.

Best wishes
 Graeme Bridge
 ALERT Editor

NATIONAL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

REPORT TO NEC MEETING in JUNE

The Local partnerships are progressing and national user groups are being formed under the care of BW to ensure the voice of the major stakeholders is heard at the managerial level of CRT. There is much to do of course but this must surely be the best opportunity to secure the future of our waterways and to allow CRT to build on the work of BW towards a properly maintained and improved network.

I accompanied Ann on a visit to NE Region in April where we enjoyed the hospitality of the regional committee at South Pennine Boat Club. It is always a pleasure to return to this region where I have enjoyed some memorable boating over the years and to have the opportunity to meet members on their own patch. The Pennine weather did it's best to drown us but no matter, the time spent with you all more than compensated for a damp and foggy couple of days.

Crick Boat Show took additional time to organise this year mainly due to another competing event. The weather was typical of the weekend with sunshine and heavy rain the order of the day. Attendance was a record for the show with visitor numbers at

24,000, ensuring the future of the show into 2013 where it will revert to the three days over the Whitsun Bank Holiday. AWCC had a steady stream of visitors and I would like to thank all who gave their time to help on the stand.

I was invited to attend two presentations in London on June 12th, firstly by the DEFRA Team, followed by Transition Trustees and BW to celebrate the launch of the trust. These events were planned as a token of appreciation to all those who have supported and helped in the work of effecting the transfer. AWCC has been closely involved through consultations, discussions and meetings to ensure that our voice continues to be heard by those responsible for the care of our waterways.

(Additional for Alert)

The seed of change is not confined to the waterways alone as AWCC has the benefit of new faces to several of our posts at regional and national level.

I would like to welcome Jean and Garth Robinson who take the posts of NE Region Chair and Secretary respectively.

Roland Dotchin, as most will be aware, has taken the role as National Secretary, freeing

Brian Rich to concentrate on the post of Communication Officer.

Erica Martin has bravely offered to take responsibility for membership matters and handbook updates, which will provide a central point of communication for this important function.

Terry Aris, currently our RYA representative is due to stand down from post in the near future. We will not however be losing his expertise as Terry has taken the role of Development Officer to concentrate on the provision of appropriate merchandise and service benefits for members of the Association.

I would like to offer recognition to all those who have given and continue to give their support to the Association.

Finally, but by no means least I would like to acknowledge the achievement by Pauline King and those members of S & W Committee working to secure the future of the region. It will be a major asset to the association to be fully represented as we move to the CRT.

Best wishes for a happy and safe summer,

Paul

REGIONAL CHAIRMEN'S REPORTS

London Region



NOTES FROM P.L.A. MEETING

London Gateway Development this is on the shell haven site, the new container ships are to be much larger with better hull designs and able to travel at 8-10 Knots this is better for steerage with little wash.

Several types of ID cards are to be issued people using the river.

The steel to carry out repairs to Blackfrairs Bridge (20000 tonnes) was transported by water.

SPRING SOCIAL

This was to the docklands museum a very interesting an enjoyable trip with 14 members present, our thanks to Bob who organised the visit.

WILLOWTREE PARK

The boat gathering was held a week earlier due to the Diamond Jubilee celebrations we had 16 boats with many from H.C.C. many thanks for their support at this 2 day rally we needed the marquee to provide some shade from the sun.

CRICK

Our first visit to the boat show, we did some stand duty but had to leave early for my sons 40th birthday.

CANAL & RIVER TRUST

I was delighted to hear that Terry Aris has been appointed to serve. I have been invited to the launch at Holiday Inn near Camden Lock on 12th July 2012. I was fortunate to speak to Sir Brian Fender who is to chair the London Region Partnership at Little Venice during Cavalcade weekend. Brian Fender was previously in higher education.

Canal & River Trust have gained some commercial sponsorship this is very good news in these early days of C&RT.

LONDON WATERWAYS COMMISSION

A new scheme for waste movements on the River Lee using 8no. 15ft. containers on A barge, also 4no.15ft will fit on a 60 ft. rail car. This scheme was presented by Ralph Goldney North London Waste Authority and is expected to save 25000 Road

Movements per annum. Seven London Boroughs are in the scheme.

QUEENS DIAMOND JUBILEE RIVER PAGENT

I would like to thank everybody that took part, this involved many practice runs. It was A magnificent spectacle, I took two of my grandchildren and had quite a good view.

It was real travesty that the B.B.C. did not do a professional report and coverage of the event. Mark Thompson D.G. tended to blame the wet weather.

QUEENS BIRTHDAY HONOURS

Many congratulations to Roger Squires, and Beryl Windsor on their BEM medal

Terry Gillam

REGIONAL CHAIRMEN'S REPORTS

South
East

Crick Boat Show. The show was successful considering the weather and other events taking place. A.W.C.C. had a stream of visitors who were directed to local clubs in their areas. CRT was not so well known by outsiders but the boating community were well aware of it and looking forward to the new regime.

Marsworth Redevelopment. I was asked by Brian Rich, National Secretary, if I knew anything about an article which appeared in the "Bucks Herald", re:-Marsworth Basin Redevelopment, which I did not. The development is for 12 new dwellings and the conversion of the former carpenter's workshop to provide a total of 13 dwellings with new and upgraded boater's facilities. I communicated with the Aylesbury Canal Society who told me all the plans are on the AVDC Planning Website, Search 10/1336 APP. During the communication with Aylesbury it came to light that they were having problems at Aylesbury. I offered help on behalf of A.W.C.C. to which they thanked us but said they are waiting on the slow moving Council to sanction the agreement. (See "Canal Boat" July 2012 issue.)

N.A.B.E.S. I raised the issue of N.A.B.E.S. at last Friday's meeting. The response was negative. I got the impression nobody knew anything about them.

Thrupp Canal Cruising Club. After much deliberation at Thrupp they have decided to return to South and West Region from which they joined us when South and West was disbanded. This was not unexpected due to the distance the Repts, who attended South-East meetings regularly, had to travel.

Wilton Marina Cruising Club. Wilton celebrated their 40th. Anniversary on the 26th. May. They raised £300 for the Northampton and Warwickshire Air Ambulance. It was well attended by club members and South-East Region Repts. **Dunstable and District Boat Club.** The club has now achieved the Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) status. This helps them to achieve Tax Benefits.

Drought Conditions. Tring Summit is now fully open along with the Northampton Arm. Restrictions have been eased on other flights in the South-East Region.

Ralph Sullivan

North
West

At our Regional Meeting held on 10th May 12 clubs were represented. We had a presentation from Marple Civic Society about the possible development of Marple Wharf on the Macclesfield Canal which would have a negative impact on the heritage value of the area, the visitor mooring amenity and the existing service block.

Clubs were vigorously encouraged to accept minutes of Regional meetings by e-mail and to register for the download of 'Alert' given the recent increase in postal charges. At £10 per Club Regional Subscriptions, 2 copies of the Minutes per Club will cost about £7.50 per.

In April AWCC NW were represented at the BW Customer Forums:- Manchester & Pennine North West and the North Wales & Borders. There is some concern at the responses to pre submitted questions with some answers evasive and very unclear. There is growing concern at the frequency of lock/navigation problems on the Huddersfield Narrow and Rochdale Canals leading to closures on an almost weekly basis.

On 30th March the funeral was held of Maureen Shaw, a well known and loved waterways character (see Summer Alert). Maureen's last trip to her funeral was through Middlewich Locks aboard former working boat 'Tay'. AWCC and local clubs were represented.

Broken Cross Boat Club - Volunteer Project at Bramble Cutting. A presentation was made and well received at BW Customer Forum, a second working weekend was held in June. A third weekend is planned for end of July.

Plank Lane Bridge, Leigh Branch (Leeds & Liverpool Canal). In response to AWCC and local Clubs' concerns as to the restricted opening times as a 'manned' bridge, this bridge is now user/boater operated with restrictions only during peak traffic hours Monday to Friday. This arrangement will be reviewed in September.

AWCC has been consulted regarding the draft new User Guide for the Bridgewater Canal Company and submitted helpful amendments.

Bryan Pollard

South & West Region

This reinstated Region held a meeting at Pewsey Wharf Boat Club and in addition to the Chairman and Secretary we found a willing volunteer to be our Treasurer – oh for some funds. Hopefully by the time of the June NEC we will have funds and will be able to set up a bank account

Like other regions this one was short of water, as it was last October but following the recent rain levels are looking much better. Part of the River Kennet appeared on TV only today with water flowing again, only a few weeks that same stretch had been completely dry, although ground water levels are still low.

I attended the Canal User Forum held in Devizes on 3 May and here follows a brief outline of that meeting.

A national update was given of the current situation in the move to Trust status. Minor details have changed since the meeting and I won't repeat what we were told here as I am sure you have all heard similar talks.

Despite the calendar of action that was presented following the last meeting of the Local Mooring Strategy last year none of these actions have taken place but it was announced that a further consultation on that consultation (are you keeping up!) and the area Waterways Partnership will form a moorings sub committee to lead the analysis of responses. How can you have any confidence that there would be any positive outcome in the near future?

A review of the stoppages over the 2011/2012 winter was given and an overview of what may happen 2012/2013 winter.

Water resources were discussed in great detail. Plans are being made to conserve water by placing advisory notices that narrow boats should wait for up to an hour to pair up when going through locks and lock use could be limited.

A follow up meeting of Liveboards and Wiltshire Council was held on 8 May aimed at establishing a dialogue with under represented groups in the county. Some of the boaters present wanted emphasis that they enjoyed the simpler life and were not looking for the provision of "extras". However, there needed to be an accepted level of the right to the basics, their homes are proper homes and this fact could no longer be ignored.

On 23 May BW issued a statement, following a case brought by Nick Brown of the National Barge Travellers Association, stating "that the High Court had issued a judgement upholding the lawfulness of its Guidance for Boaters Without a Home Mooring". However, Nick Brown is continuing his Judicial Review of BW's Guidance. For full information see <http://kanda.boatingcommunity.org.uk> and for the whole press release see www.barge-traveller.org.uk

Let's just hope there is water in the canal and spaces in which to moor during this coming season.

Pauline King

REGIONAL CHAIRMEN'S REPORTS



Midlands

Midlands May meeting was well attended with Ian Wood in the Chair for first time. All quiet in the Midlands, next meeting October.

Returning to our Caldon mooring after a memorable cruise to Liverpool, I was approached by a couple on towpath, asking how to donate to CRT in memory of her father who had lived & worked on boats all his life. Ruth Ruderham advised me that they should contact MITCH RICHARDS, Supporter Care Team tel 07825 716726 or 01908 302504 email Mitch.Richards@britishwaterways.co.uk. Ruth was very encouraged to hear from me.

Ian Wood

President Kildare left Etruria in April, bound for the River Pageant. On board were items from major sponsors, including a mini digger from JCB. There was a good crowd, with many dignitaries including the Loer Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Ian Dudson, who walked the first part of President's journey. A great shame that TV coverage was so inadequate, no close-up photography & no helpful commentary.

North East

We were unanimously elected (surprise, surprise!) at the June meeting of N.E. region in Thorne. As we've been on the boat since then, we have had no opportunity to get together with Terry Brown or to put a report together for Alert.

At least N.E. Region now has its full complement of officers? Jean has been AWCC rep. for South Pennine since 2000, and Garth has been official chauffeur and has attended most of the meetings and A.G.M's in the meantime.

We are trying to arrange to meet up with Paul so that he can give us a few pointers, but when we get home later this month, we should be able to get up to speed ahead of the September meeting at Black Buoy.

Jean and Garth Robinson

NATIONAL SECRETARY

THOUGHTS ON THE INTERNET



FROM ROLAND

Well done to all the AWCC Member Clubs who have agreed to accept the Alert and AWCC communications through internet downloads or email.

This will result in a considerable cost saving to National and Regions

Land mail is now a very expensive and unreliable means of communication. Anyone who has recently posted a parcel is shocked at the cost, and then worries if it will be delivered.

The NW Region in recent times has had two cheques lost in the post, one for one thousand and seventy pounds, yes **£1070**, involving visits to bank, reissuing cheques and delays in payments.

The Internet, Emails and mobile phones have made huge progress since their creation just over 20 years ago, **amazing in such a short time**, and continues to improve, and expand, and it is now a wonderful means of communication, sending information anywhere in the world in seconds. I can remember when a mobile phone just made voice calls, but then I am ancient, and also remember Brownie cameras, and cameras with films.

We all have a grumble when we receive junk and unwanted emails, (American and Canadian friends all seem to have the habit of sending out everything they get in), but we can always relegate junk to our Spam, and read later, or use the delete button, which makes emails disappear in a nanosecond. And they are not as intrusive as the junk mail that comes through our letter box, and how about use of paper and loss of Rain Forests.

In conclusion I could forecast the Land Mail will be obsolete eventually, perhaps in our grand childrens life time, and as we watch human beings texting, twittering, googling blogging, etc., (whatever that lot are,) it would seem inevitable that human speech will also become obsolete. Good luck with it all, cheers to the future,
Roland Dotchin.
National Secretary

BOAT RALLY

24th – 27th May 2013

To celebrate 45 years of the Association & The 40th Anniversary of the re-opening of The Great Northern Basin

Boat / Caravan Entry: £ 15 for 2 adults
(Additional Crew members £5 per person)

A plaque will be awarded to all craft entering and attending the Rally

Further enquires to Mrs Christine Baylis
Tel: 01623 201208 Mob: 07889 444190

Application forms for the event can be obtained from the website <http://erewashcanalpreservationanddevelopmentassoc.org.uk/> or by emailing: subscribe.erewash@btinternet.com

INTERCLUB MAG COMPETITION

Thanks to all the Editors who continue to send their club magazines for entry in to the INTERCLUB competition. I will forward these on to the Judge for next years comp.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THEY SHOULD BE SENT TO THE EDITOR OF ALERT AT THE ADDRESS ON THE LAST PAGE AND NOT TO THE PREVIOUS EDITOR, HEATHER BEARPARK, WHO IS STILL RECEIVING SOME ISSUES.

Please also include this years judge Ian Bruce if you are sending electronic versions of your mag or newsletter.

ian@waterwaysongs.co.uk

(Please note any mags / newsletters already sent to Heather will be forwarded to Ian.)

CLUB NEWS REPORTS

Gathering of Boats 8th-10th June 2012 Stafford Boat Club

Over the weekend of the 8-10th June the Club held a "Gathering of Boats" and were honoured by the presence of Mrs Lynne Berry OBE Deputy Chair of The Canal and River Trust who attended in her own right. The purpose of event was to raise funds for the restoration of the STAFFORD RIVERWAY LINK the Patron being The Lord Stafford, DL, FRAGS, the President is Mr David Kidney and the Vice President is Mr Jeremy Lefroy MP.

Also in the official party were the Mayor of Stafford, Councillor Mr Bryan Cross MBE and his wife, Mayoress Mrs Lily Cross, both members of Stafford Boat Club. The event was attended by 86 boats and 20 caravans, motor-homes and tents and in excess of 250 persons experienced a most enjoyable weekend of stalls and competitions coupled with three evenings of varied musical entertainment. The weather was a wet start-high winds



Official Guests: (L to R) Mrs Lily Cross (Mayoress), Mr John Mountfort (Commodore of Stafford Boat Club) Mrs Lynne Berry OBE, Mrs Christine Mountfort, Councillor Bryan Cross MBE (Mayor of Stafford).

later, but dry on Saturday and glorious on Sunday.

Thanks to the hard work of a large number of members of the club the funds raised over the weekend amounted to in excess of £3,000 – with still five months of the year remaining to enable it to aim for a higher total.

The objective of the SRL is to promote the restoration of the historic river and canal waterway linking the county town of Stafford to the national waterways network for the benefit of the community and all interested groups. Historically the SRL was known as the "STAFFORD BRANCH CANAL and SOW NAVIGATION"



Stafford Boat Club Junior Team - Winners of the AWCC Inter Club Sports Trophy, in the picture, from left to right are: Jake Scriven, David Thompson, Kathryn Churchill, Marcus Thompson and Sam Scriven.



On Saturday, after a boat trip along the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal from Baswich (the point at which the old Stafford Branch Canal parted from the main canal network) Lynne, introduced by Mr John Mountfort, Commodore/Chairman of Stafford Boat Club, officially opened the new footbridge over the Club Arm of the canal.

There is a Feature Article on the Stafford Riverway Link by John Laidlar on page 9 of this issue.

The FBCC boat gathering at Dunham, Bridgewater Canal. 26th and 27th of May 2012.

There was an excellent turn out of boats for the boat gathering 84 boats attended.

There were boats from far and wide. The weather was fine all weekend. There were markets stalls selling everything from boat parts to cakes then onto the ferret racing which I was told was great fun. Tea and cakes were available in the hall supplied by Sale C.C. who also supplied some of the goods for the auction along with many others including some lovely hand painted Roses and Castles ware. The auction raised sterling £91-66 for the Marie Curie cancer research charity. A very big thanks to all who donated.

Then onto the evening many gathered in the hall where we were told that due to a bereavement and illness the entertainment musicians were unable to attend.

There was more tea, cakes, pies and then curry supplied by the Watch House vice chairman.

Then onto a game of Irish bingo and heads and tails neither of which I have played before but we all enjoyed. Then the raffle which again had some nice donations including one from our club.

The parties went on late into the night and the early hours of Sunday morning.

A big thanks to David and Joyce for organizing the gathering I hope we see more of these as it gave us a chance to see old friends and make new ones.

Alan. Vice commodore Lymm CC.

CLUB NEWS REPORTS

BRAMBLE CUTTINGS - VOLUNTEER PROJECT

Broken Cross Boat Club are involved in a volunteer project

The focus of the project is a former clay pit on the off side of the Trent & Mersey canal approx 1.5 miles north of Middlewich.

In 1997 the Club agreed with BW that they could develop the site into a picnic and mooring site for boaters. The site was overgrown with brambles, trees and shrubs, access to the site was difficult. The first person to access the site could only get there by a rowing boat. After several working parties the vegetation was cut back sufficiently to enable narrow boats to moor at the site, some picnic tables were provided from Club funds



1998 when we first had the site "under control."

Since then BCBC have maintained the site, by grass cutting, painting the picnic tables and managing the coppice on site. Bramble Cutting has become well known and very popular with local and passing boaters. As access is by boat only any work on site and materials needed must be well planned in advance.

In April 2011 I attended the BW Manchester & Pennine Customer Forum. In one of the syndicates we discussed volunteering and I proposed Bramble Cutting as a suitable project to consider.

After an initial site meeting with BW and agreement from the Club committee I developed a draft plan of improvements that could be made to the site that included addressing safety issues, increasing mooring capacity, renewing the original picnic tables, exploiting the heritage of the site, making provision for wildlife and improving the signage on site.

Meetings were held with BW on and off site to discuss the plan and its implementation.

Steve O'Sullivan attended a Club event to outline the volunteer scheme to members.

The next step was to adopt the site under the BW Waterway Adoption Scheme.

I made a presentation detailing the progress made on the project to the Manchester & Pennine Customer Forum meeting in March 2012. This was well received and attendees were supportive of what we were trying to achieve.

In 2012 we scheduled 3 working party weekends for March, May and July into the Clubs social calendar.

Discussions were ongoing with BW about how to source materials and specifically picnic tables from a third party for the July working party. Under the new Canal & River Trust four new picnic tables were provided for the project that had been produced in Shrewsbury Prison using wood from former lock gates. There were three conventional tables and one with disabled access.

In March - we formally adopted the site and launched the project. We built some new steps using stop planks provided by BW to replace the unsafe steps made from broken flags together with our usual grass cutting etc. We reduced the size of a large tree that had fallen down over the previous winter.

At our working party in May - we provided additional treads to the steps where the banking was higher, started to expose the railway track on site and completed some vegetation control and of course the usual grass cutting.

Our July working party moved the project forward significantly. The new picnic tables were delivered to Anderton Boat Lift car park. The weight of the tables, which were made from oak, caused some concern. Following a risk assessment we partially disassembled the tables to reduce their weight before I delivered them to site using a CRT workboat. The tables were reassembled on site and one was installed on a concrete pad. Following the recent wet weather the grass took a considerable amount of manpower to get back under control. The railway track was exposed to sleeper level, and hopefully in the future we will be able to highlight it with limestone chippings. We had a total 9 boats with 17 club members on site for the weekend.

The aim now is to have an additional work party in August to complete the installation of the 3 other picnic tables.

The remaining elements of the plan will probably have to wait until 2013 for completion.



In summary, since March 2012 we have provided 251 hours of volunteer labour.

BW / CRT have provided materials, sourced the new picnic tables and enabled us get the tables to site. As a volunteer project Broken Cross Boat Club have achieved far more than we could have achieved as an individual Club. Members are more motivated at the working parties because they can see the progress made and have a focus and direction for the future of the site.

PARLIAMENTARY WATERWAYS GROUP

A National Trust for the Inland Waterways

A personal reflection by David Pearce

July 12th, 2012 was a momentous day in the chequered history of the inland waterways, as it saw the formal launch of the Canal & River Trust. As the ubiquitous 'they' would say, nothing's new! The IWA started lobbying Government back in the late 1940s for a Waterways Conservancy, but we are finally there.

In more recent times, about a dozen years ago, I remember well when Dave Fletcher, the then Chief Executive of British Waterways, came to a meeting in buoyant mood and suggested that the way forward for BW was a charitable trust. It was discussed in some detail in many meetings with all the main user groups involved, including of course, AWCC. It was with a certain amount of sadness that the final advice from the lawyers was that the time was not right and that the "trust" should, for the time being, be restricted to just the museums. However, the grand plan did not go away in the minds of many on both sides of the fence.

I believe that it was late 2008, that an equally buoyant new Chief Executive, Robin Evans, came to a meeting of the British Waterways Advisory Forum (BWAFF) and said that now was the time to reconsider the trust idea. And to those who said that the idea had failed once, he had an instant response. He said that in the last few years, the current Government had changed for the good the legislation affecting charitable organisations and 'not for profit' companies and that we, the Board think that it is now a runner! His commitment seemed complete at this early stage, but he added with a somewhat more sombre face, we simply cannot go on as we are. Things will get worse and worse and eventually collapse; not tomorrow, but it will happen in the long run. At least with a trust, there will be hope for the future. So, we all committed ourselves, there and then to join in the process of working it out together.

In passing, BWAFF was formed in 2005 to improve the top-level mechanism for discussing policy matters with the BW Board. It was part of BW's 'openness and accountability' initiative of the time and was to include all boating and non-boating user organisations, plus marine industry. However, the regularly contributing groups in recent years have been AWCC, APCO, BCU, BMF, IWA, RBOA, RYA, SOW and

TBA. The value of BWAFF was clearly demonstrated in the process of creating CRT and in my view will now need to be replaced with something similar in the new charitable era.

And so, what looked like a long process started. A feasibility study was done, an outline plan was written, together with the famous "2020" report of the future vision. This was all done with BWAFF members input and co-operation. Tony Hales, BW's Chairman, being a well-experienced and wily character knew that political agreement was essential, so he arranged a 2020 launch on the terrace of the Houses of Parliament. Representatives of the three major parties all spoke in favour, so the omens were good and the way ahead seemed clear.

We had the small matter of a general election in 2010, with a new coalition government elected. All work on a Waterways White Paper was stopped and the situation suddenly became somewhat unclear. However, as I am sure you all recall, the new Government soon caught a cold over their woodlands proposals, as they had failed to appreciate the public's mood, and the Secretary of State escaped the sack by the skin of her teeth. In the mean time, a new Waterways Minister had been doing a lot of talking to his user community and the realisation dawned that here was a project with both political and public support that was all but ready to start. The replacement lead project was there and raring to go! The New Waterways Trust, as it was called at first, was then full speed ahead with full co-operation between the Minister's office, the DEFRA Waterways Department, the BW Board and the BWAFF members. There was very much a spirit of we can do it together, led by the Minister, Richard Benyon, who was on side throughout.

The Minister then appointed a team of recently retired worthies to select interim trustees. I recall being asked to accompany them, together with John Dodwell, on a cruise around the BCN, early one morning. I met John Kittmer, the newly appointed 'high-flyer' head of the DEFRA Waterways Dept, whose job it was to see it all through and quickly. We realised that we came from similar civil service backgrounds, which helped break the ice, so we talked very seriously about money, or rather the lack of it. But from that initial discussion grew what was a most satisfactory financial settlement under the current rather gloomy economic circumstances.

Most boaters know the rest of the story. The Trustees were appointed, a comprehensive consultation was done, and the results taken on board by DEFRA - the new Council was assembled with a combination of elected and

appointed members. However, I should not disguise the fact that there was a mountain of legal work to be done by the BW and DEFRA joint legal teams before the final sign-off could occur and it is understandable that politicians wanted to ensure that it was all in good order. The only potential hold-up was the Parliamentary process. It was a new process in both Lords and Commons, but then the subject matter should not have been controversial, as all parties appeared to be in agreement with the principle of a trust for the inland waterways. The EFRA Select Committee had stated a requirement of 60 days of formal scrutiny, which involved the examination of witnesses giving verbal submissions, but Allun Michael, a former Waterways Minister and then Chairman of the Parliamentary Waterways Group, promised to try to get it reduced.

It all got a bit nail-biting in the end as one deadline came and went. The formal launch just had to be some time between the Queen's Jubilee celebrations and the start of the Olympics, for obvious media reasons. But then, quite quietly the Parliamentary business came to an end on 29 June and the Secretary of State signed the Order on 2 July - the celebration on 12th could go ahead.

You could say that this amazing transition has consumed many years of my life, but then I was more than happy to ensure that AWCC was at the heart of it all. We may not shout as loud as some organisations, but our contribution was solid and substantial and much appreciated by all. John Kittmer said at the time of the consultation that, surely AWCC must have employed a consultant to write their report, to which we replied, no, it was all home-grown. John also made the point to me in the euphoria of the launch party that things have changed somewhat in the civil service since you were in Whitehall. Well, it may be less than 20 years ago, but things are different and people are indeed listened to more. Without a sense of doing it together, creating CRT would never have happened in little more than three years. It is a tremendous achievement in all respects. Let us hope that this all bodes well for the future, for us, our boating, and for all the others that are to be directly involved with our new waterways trust.

David Pearce
20 July 2012



TECHNICAL OFFICER'S REPORT

Introduction

1. I have four items of interest to bring to your attention in this edition of Alert. They are:
 - a. Change of BSS contact details
 - b. The review into the Examination Checking Procedures
 - c. Publication of the new Carbon Monoxide Safety leaflet
 - d. Sources of other safety related information

Change of Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) contact details.

2. The transfer of British Waterways to the Canal & River Trust sees the BSS with new contact details.
 - a. The postal address is: Boat Safety Scheme, First Floor North, Station House, 500 Elder Gate, Milton Keynes, MK9 1BB.
 - b. The national phone number is: 0333 202 1000.
 - c. The web address is: www.boatsafetyscheme.org.
 - d. The email address is: bss.enquiries@boatsafetyscheme.org.

Review of Examination Checking Procedures (ECP)

3. ECPs for private boats have undergone a periodic review by the Scheme's stakeholders. Proposed changes have been posted on the BSS website with an opportunity for people to view and offer comments on the proposals until Tuesday 28th August. The link is: <http://www.boatsafetyscheme.org/bss-organisation/news-from-the-bss/ecp-review-2012>.

4. Most of the changes are editorial in nature, tidying up terms and descriptions, to see that the checks are applied consistently by BSS examiners and help reduce risks. The balance of the changes, around 40%, can be summarised thus:
 - a. A new check for portable fuel tanks in engine spaces.
 - b. Five new advice checks concerning 230V a.c. systems.
 - c. A new advice check for cracks and unintended gaps on solid fuel appliances.
 - d. 15 existing checks amended to introduce an enhanced technical requirement;
 - e. 63 changes to existing checks that reduce or slightly change the technical impact.
 - f. Two checks, one about marine fuel filters and one about 230V a.c. shore connections are being removed.

5. It is anticipated that the changes will take effect on 1 January 2013, by when all examiners will have completed online and local workshop training exercises. The final versions will be posted on the BSS website later this year as pdf, and will be available to be saved to computers or printed.

Publication of the Carbon Monoxide Safety leaflet

6. A new leaflet dealing specifically with Carbon Monoxide Safety on Boats has been published by the Scheme. At 16 pages it is greatly enhanced on the earlier edition and I commend it to you all. Clubs may consider ordering in bulk from the BSS to ensure all their members receive a copy. It may also be viewed and downloaded at: <http://staysafe.boatsafetyscheme.com/carbon-monoxide-%28co%29>

Sources of other safety related information

7. The BSS website holds a wealth of other safety related information. Two further links worth exploring are: <http://staysafe.boatsafetyscheme.com/fire-safety-for-boats> and: <http://staysafe.boatsafetyscheme.com/solid-fuel-stoves-on-boats>. Remember the Scheme's tag-line:

Go Boating – Stay Safe.

Andrew Phasey
 Technical Officer
 04 August 2012



BRIDGEWATER CANAL

Pomona Lock fees are to be increased to £24.00 per craft per lock with immediate effect until further notice. Craft returning through the Lock on the same day will only be charged a single fee

CROOKE BOAT & FOLK FESTIVAL

The 4th Boat and Folk Festival is to be held from 21st to 23rd September in aid of various charities at Croke Village, west of Wigan on the L&L Canal. No charge for entry, with or without a boat. Contact Croke CC Vice Commodore, Malcolm Holbrooke at malcom.holbrook@btinternet.com

WEAVER SWING BRIDGE

AWCC NW Sec, Nick Culliford attended a consultation meeting with C&RT & Cheshire West & Chester Council regarding the major renovation of Sutton Weaver Swing Bridge on the A56 near Frodsham. The work which is expected to cost about £4.5m is due to start in June 2013 and last for up to 11 months. The bridge will be left in place with a single lane for road traffic for the duration. There will be a 4m wide gap under the bridge with a 2.2m headroom over normal river level. This should be sufficient for all canal craft. The completed work will also include the installation of an Elson disposal unit (which we have been asking for over many years).

SOUTH PENINE BOAT CLUB RALLY 2013

It is planned for the bank holiday weekend 3-5 May. Visiting boaters welcome to join in the social events as well as the public open day on the Saturday. More details and booking forms will be available on the club Website in due course www.southpennineboatclub.co.uk

HEATHER BEARPARK
 Rally Chair

RESTORATION CONNECTIONS FEATURE

Boat club members are often at the forefront when there is a local restoration scheme. Here we feature two such schemes involving Stafford and Bridgewater Boat Clubs. If your club has a pet project please let us know.

STAFFORD RIVERWAY LINK and Stafford Boat Club

Stafford Riverway Link is a Community Interest Company that has as its' objective to promote the restoration of the historic river and canal waterway (previously known as the Stafford Branch Canal and Sow Navigation) linking the county town of Stafford to the national waterways network for the benefit of the community and all interested groups. (see www.stafford-riverway-link.co.uk)

The Patron is The Lord Stafford, DL, FRAGS - the President is Mr David Kidney and the Vice President is Mr Jeremy Lefroy MP. The Chairman is Mr Ivor Hind (Wolverhampton Boat Club & Stafford Boat Club)

The route of the SRL commences from the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal at Baswich from where in 1814 work started on the 1½ mile navigation involving the construction of a roving bridge, lock, lock house, aqueduct and short pound followed by straightening and deepening the River Sow. Opened in 1816 and navigable until the 1920's the navigation had a terminus at a coal wharf adjacent to the river near to the present Green Bridge. The main purpose was to carry coals, lime and "merchandise" but the waterway proved also to be popular with pleasure boaters. The wharf and channel were infilled in the 1930's and was subsequently used as a cattle market and as a car park. The area is now a commercial site awaiting redevelopment. Opposite the former wharf was the Royal Brine Baths (picture below shows channel to wharf) to which brine was pumped from Baswich along a pipe that followed the course of the navigation. At Baswich, the roving bridge, lock and aqueduct survived until the 1970's but traces of the bridge are still visible in the picture with the spill weir being the point of the junction—the Lock House stood to the left of the junction and it is possible that this will be rebuilt by the present owners of the land.) The pound walls beyond, parts of the lock chamber and the entrance to the aqueduct are still partly visible. The river channel, all the other bridges and most of the towpath into Stafford are still in place but weir levels on the river have been changed as part of flood relief works and the Rivers Sow and Penk have been realigned.



The Navigation forms the first part of Stafford Borough Council's Littleworth to Baswich Bridge Waterside Doorstep Walk and the towpath is used as a footpath.

A recent professional feasibility study costing in the region of £8,000 has proved the viability of the restoration project with which Stafford Boat Club has been involved since the inception of the idea; the Vice Chairman and Clerk of Works of SRL is John Mountfort,

Commodore of SBC; with two other directors of the Club, Stella Machin as Company Secretary and "Joe" Owen Lockwood in charge of Fund Raising.

Each year, as a part of its' many activities, Stafford Boat Club raises funds for local charities and other deserving causes; alternating year on year between water based and land based organisations. As a consequence of its' deep involvement with SRL the Club has previously raised over £6,000 (2010) and for the year 2012 has again chosen this organisation for its' fund raising activities.

Other challenges, in support of the project, being undertaken by members of the Club are weekly sales of jams, cakes and garden



The start of the Stafford Riverway Link at Baswich on the Staffs and Worcs Canal close to the Stafford Boat Club

produce and a weekly "White Elephant" Bring and Buy stall. The Clubs' own group "Rock Bottom" is planning an evening of music and merriment and the Social committee is featuring a "Grand Draw" with currently over 45 prizes – tickets are available from Graham Thick at the Club – (please see www.staffordboatclub.co.uk) and the draw will take place on the 6th October at the club.

Regular work parties are being held by SRL at Baswich and everybody is welcome to attend to assist with the clearance of vegetation and some excavation work to investigate what lies beneath. If you are interested please contact the working party co-ordinator, Mr John Potter on 01785 226662 for further details and bring with you suitable footwear (boots or wellies), gloves and some food. Tea and coffee will be provided.

Illustrated talks regarding the project are available to any interested organisation. Kindly contact Mr Ivor Hind, Chairman of SRL on 01785 714459 or 07966 249151 or ivor@familyhind.co.uk

Other supporters of SRL are the Inland Waterways Association (I.W.A) which has provided two grants (one of £2,000 from the IWA 2008 National Festival held at Pendeford Park, Atherley Junction,

RESTORATION CONNECTIONS FEATURE

Wolverhampton), to help fund the feasibility study and Stafford Borough Council.

Some months ago ASDA Stafford invited SRL to man a stand in the foyer of the store to obtain signatures to a petition in support of the aims and objectives for the River Sow between Stafford and Baswich. Superb support was received with the main comment being that it is high time that the appalling state of the river was dealt with, to help bring Stafford in line with Birmingham, Wolverhampton and other major towns and cities where much has been done to improve their waterside images culminating with developers fighting to take space.

ADVERTISEMENT on behalf of Wolverhampton Boat Club, many members of which are also true supporters of SRL. WBC is hosting an "At Home" weekend over the Bank Holiday weekend (24th-26th August 2012) during which, on Saturday 25th Ivor Hind together with his daughter Paula, with the support of the club's own "Elsan Band", will be in concert – **ALL in support of SRL.** Further details can be obtained from Ivor (see his details above).

John Laidlar

RUNCORN LOCKS and the Bridgewater Motor Boat Club

The boat traffic at western end of the Bridgewater Canal used to descend through two sets of locks which originally gave access to the River Mersey at Runcorn. With the coming of the Manchester Ship Canal one set locks discharged into the new waterway and other into the dock system at the start of the Runcorn Western Canal which in turn linked up with the Ship Canal and Weaver Navigation.



The path leads down through the middle and penultimate pairs of locks with Bridgewater House on the left and the River Mersey visible between the new houses where the last lock is situated and where it connects with the Manchester Ship Canal

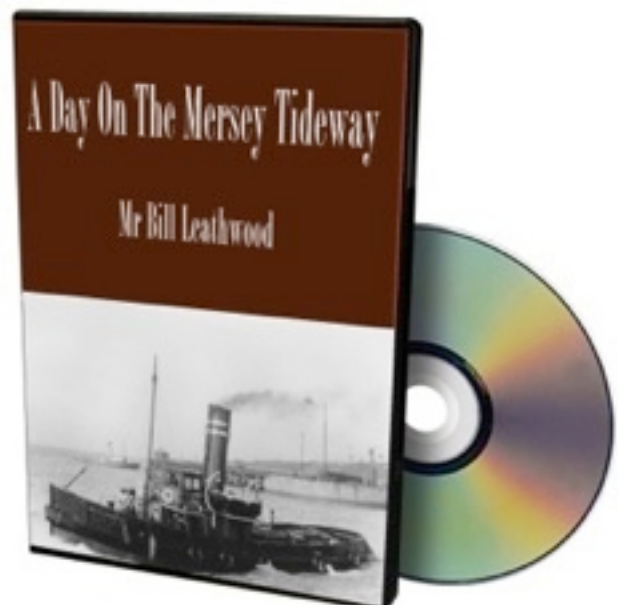
By the 1930's the old line to the ship canal was closed followed by closure of the new line in the 1960's. The building of the approach roads to the Runcorn –Widnes Bridge at that time saw the Bridgewater Canal severed from the disused lines of locks. The site of the new line was eventually built over but thankfully the old line remains pretty much intact. The line consists of five double staircase locks. The top one is buried beneath the approach roads mentioned and the second one has been landscaped over. The remaining three pairs are simply half filled with sand and are clearly visible on the path down to the historic Bridgewater House (home to the Canal Duke during it's construction) See above.

A window of opportunity to see the old line restored to navigation is available with the building of a second Mersey crossing just upstream of the existing bridge. Work has commenced and it is hoped that the re-

routing of the expressway roads from old bridge to new will allow the severed canal to be reconnected to the locks.

That is the aim of the Runcorn Locks Restoration Society, formed in 2004 with the full support of the local council. On being set up it received financial support from many interested parties including both National and Regional AWCC. The members of Bridgewater Motor Boat Club are also keen to see the route re-opened as the Weaver and the Shropie will then be within a couple of hours cruise from the clubhouse. There is a long way to go before the aims are achieved but we live in hope. Few expected the opening of the Huddersfield and Rochdale canals 10 years since but it happened.

One of the leading lights in the formation of the society was local hero Mr Bill Leathwood. Bill grew up around the working locks and at one time worked as crew on the Mersey Tugs. Sadly Bill, aged 92, died a couple of years ago but has left us a legacy in the form of a 60 minute talk he gave to BMBC a while ago. His talk is the story of a day in the life of the crew of the tug SALFORD as it tows a line of flats from Liverpool to Runcorn. His eloquent delivery and knowledge of his subject provides a fascinating and detailed informative insight into a the history of water transport in the area during the 1930's. The video which has been professional reproduced has had the addition of lots of photographs of the places and the craft mentioned in Bills talk which help those unfamiliar with the subject gain a better insight. The DVD is available from the Editor (address at the back) for £11 post paid, all profits going directly to the Society. For further information visit..... runcornlocksrestoration.or



THAMES PAGEANT TRIP REPORT

A fascinating trip report on the journey of this historic craft as she makes her way to London and the Thames pageant.

St George, Boston to the Thames

Our Journey started On Monday the 7th May when Eric called at 17.20hrs to tell me that Michael Moran the Lock keeper at the Grand Sluice Boston had called saying that their was an opportunity for us to sail on the Tuesday and he suggested a tide level at the sluice of around 10.30hrs 8th May, "was I available" came the question. Having just walked in home from a very successful weekend at The Soar Boating Club to celebrate May day I was very tired and probably still worse for beer but I knew this was a good opportunity not to be missed with the current trend for unsettled weather so I readily agreed and quickly packed a bag and arrived at Willow moorings around 18.15hrs.

Frank and June Hutchinson had kindly agreed to drive us to Boston and it rained heavily all the way there, we had a slight break in the rain to walk to the boat and get settled in for the night.

We studied the charts and made preparations for the following day, had a night cap and retired to our bunks.

Tuesday we awoke to a pleasant morning had a good breakfast and made our way to the sluice to await a level. St George is too long to be locked through the sluice so we have to wait for the tide and river level to be equal, this then gives us around 5 minutes to clear the sluice.

We motored through the town and past the docks then increased our revs to around 1900 rpm which is quite high and nearing maximum for St George but on this journey of some 125 miles we need to make as much speed as possible. We cruised nicely at around 9 knots and headed out into the freeman channel in the wash into a cloudy overcast day but with little wind, the sea state was slight and we made good out to the Woolpack buoy which is the southern outer marker near Hunstanton. From here we turn south towards Wells next the Sea, Blakeney and Cromer.

This Norfolk Coast line is heavily used by Fishermen for Crabs and they mark their Pots with very small markers which are hard to spot so care has to be taken so as not to pick one up around the prop. "They are referred to as Lobster Pots but I think they mainly catch crabs!!"

Eric and I take turns at the helm and we navigate using a Laurence Colour Chart Plotter which over the years of sailing with Eric we have populated with lots of way points for the East Coast some of which are 30 miles apart which is fine but when the tide turns and you are pushing the tide we sometimes only made 5.5 knots over the ground which means a journey time to waypoint of over 5 hours.

We make regular checks on the engine and the boat in general and she ran beautifully still remaining at the 1900 rpm we set originally.

As we approached Great Yarmouth the tide turned and we made a good 10.5 knots this makes a great difference to our arrival time at Lowestoft.

On the approach to Great Yarmouth the RNLI were out doing exercises and we past them with a cheery wave, night time was coming quickly and we soon had to put on our Navigation Lights to find the port bulb failed, no problem Eric quickly made a add hock arrangement with a torch, string and tape and we cruised past Great Yarmouth in the pitch black darkness of the night. "Towns always look nice lit at night".

For the last hour or so a breeze had picked up and the sea state was now moderate, a swell of around 6 feet but this was no trouble to St George and we maintained our speed well.

Lowestoft is about an hour from Great Yarmouth and we approached down the inshore route used by smaller craft this kept us out of the larger swells and meant we had less time with the sea on our beam when we turn to approach the harbour entrance. We had been heading into Southerly winds, there was no moon to help us so it was very black out there and some spray was starting to make it onto the decks but we soon saw the entrance to Lowestoft, two large stone pillars with a red and green light on the respective pillar we got permission to enter and steamed in, very cold and slightly wet.

Once in the harbour and out of the tide and wind we shut the throttle to tick over to allow us time to prepare for mooring before entering the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Harbour, this also allowed for the engine to cool off a little with a good flow of cold water before she would be switched off. We entered the harbour and found a nice spot on the visitors mooring.

We tidied the boat and settled down to a Pie, Peas and Tinned Potatoes, after

a long day this was like a meal in a Michelin starred restaurant. Washed down with a bottle of red and half bottle of brandy for medicinal purposes. We retired for the night as our planned departure was 06.30am.

This was a late finish at 10.30pm nearly 12 hours sailing, in hind sight we should have pushed Mike Moran to let us out at the first level in Boston at around 06.00am but this would have been outside normal working hours though!

Day 2 we were up at around 05.00am and topped up the fuel tanks with diesel Eric had brought with him, topped up the oil and water on the engine and warmed her up for the days cruising.

We left Lowestoft and set the revs at 2000 rpm, we had along way to go and we made our way out into a slight swell with again an overcast weather synopsis. The sea remained calm down the coast past Orfordness with just a slight chop when you pass through the Over falls. This is where land juts out to sea and the tidal currents cause a clash in the shallow waters near land and you can get quite a chop at these points.



St George quayside at Lowestoft Yacht Harbour prior to her epic voyage along the east coast to the River Thames and her appointment with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at the Royal Jubilee Pageant

THAMES PAGEANT TRIP REPORT

As we approached Harwich the mist turned to thick fog and we could hear the fog horn of a rather large ship. Before we crossed the busy shipping lanes that approach Harwich we called Harwich port control on the ships radio to get the location and direction of any large shipping. The large container ship that had left Harwich was to our left at Buoys 1 and 2 and was out bound so we were clear to cross. Once across the shipping lanes the sun started to burn through and cleared the Fog, this was a relief as fog is very disorientating and for a while we were navigating purely on instruments as we could not see anything but fog!

We made good headway towards the Thames Estuary and turned in heading towards South End. This Estuary is very large and it took several hours for us to get near to London and the weather started to worsen, the winds picked up as did the sea conditions.

Unfortunately the weather that was due to arrive around 19.30 hrs made an appearance at about 16.00 and we were making our way down a channel known as Barrow Deep, this channel is not very deep despite its name so the 8 ft swells were very close together making it very uncomfortable for the boat. We tried to find calmer water but to no avail we just had to push through it but the boat was getting a pounding, often the bow being lifted out of the water to about halfway down the boat then the bow would fall into the holes in front of her often putting the front deck (above my bed) underwater. We were concerned for her but she seemed to be taking this unpleasant abuse that nature was forcing upon us.

A good force 7 for one and a half hours was not good for the old lady and we sustained some superficial damage mainly cosmetic, we past the River Medway and all calmed down apart from the occasional ship wash they are so big and never slow down!! we tidied the ship the best we could and headed up the river towards Gravesend we decided to stop there for the night and the London Port Authority offered us one of there moorings for the night.

Once secure we checked the boat and found considerable water in the bilges, the pumps were struggling because of the detritus that one gathers in the bilge of an ageing wooden boat that's just had the biggest shaking of her life. The pumps cleaned and water now flowing back into the river we could check her over and found considerable water in the bow which was slowly running to the back and being pumped out, unfortunately most of it came in through the air vents over my bed and clothes so I decamped to the saloon settee for the night.

After the pumps stopped pumping we timed how often they ran on auto and after 1 hour we found her to be dry again. The pumps never ran all night and for that we were relieved and very pleased.

The next morning we waited for the tide and motored up the river and through the Thames barrier. We had a berth arranged at South Dock and locked in at around 15.00hrs. We secured the boat and had a look at the damage, this was really the first opportunity to do so as we hadn't been off the boat since Lowestoft, It all seems superficial as expected and Eric has plans for the following week to return to St George and make her good for the Thames Diamond Jubilee.

Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant Day

The Morning of June 3rd 2012, 1 Skipper, 1 Navigator, 1 Engineer, 2 General duties crew, 1 BBC Camera man and 8 family passengers 14 people on board all having gone through security and duly checked in to the pageant.

The boat St George is an ex Passenger boat built by Bolsoms of Poole in 1935 and originally operated in Poole harbour.

She was commandeered by the Admiralty in 1939.

St George was an open boat operated from a wheel house just forward of the centre of the boat and may have been to Dunkirk as part of operation Dynamo however because she was in the ownership of the Admiralty she does not qualify as a Dunkirk Little ship.

After her war service St George was sold to the Baker family of London who operated her from Westminster Pier as a passenger vessel. Around 1969 she failed her board of trade certification and was sold to a gentlemen who used her as an open fishing boat in the lower reaches of the Thames and it was here at Broadness Creek that Eric bought her in 1977 and brought her back to the River Soar and Kegworth where he converted her to live aboard.

35 years later and here we are very excited and eagerly awaiting instructions to slip our mooring lines from our anchorage and gently take formation in the flotilla.

Our briefing 2 nights previously was very thorough and we were aware of how focused we must be as we are to cruise at 4.5 knots with less than a boat length between craft with 1000 boats in the pageant this was to be a challenge. We also had to consider that we are 4 abreast and each had to maintain their specific position in their squadron, "Yes we were enlisted to Hotel Squadron with a Squadron leader call sign Commander Hotel" He was a Submarine commander and they are all a funny lot and he was no exception being thoroughly clear in his instructions with a great sense of humour and an honours degree from diplomacy school.

We had our passage plan and were thoroughly prepared for this fantastic experience.

14.18hrs we are instructed to slip our lines and join the Pageant. We are off!!

It took a mile or so for everyone to get into position and the river bends and bridges all offer their challenges with such a wide array of boats all with different challenges of their own, but quickly we settled down to a steady run. The VHF was invaluable we had Pageant Master Adrian Evans, who was in a huge command centre at West India Dock monitoring CCTV and issuing instructions to marshals and the Squadron leaders. This guy deserves an OBE he was keeping full control of this operation and twice he had to stop the fleet and each time this was done safely and keeping everyone in position then later he would instruct us to speed up to catch up time. What a job!

As we arrived at Albert bridge the real size of this event became apparent the crowds and cheering were very special and we were part of it, People waving and cheering as we passed by was quite awe inspiring.

The rain was a challenge along with the wind but this could not dampen our spirits or remove the smiles from our faces as we saluted our Queen and her family by dipping our ensign and removing our boaters all rehearsed and synchronised "I think Prince Phillip would have been really proud of our hats off routine"

Once we had passed the Royal Barge just past Tower Bridge we had to make our way back to West India dock for over night moorings, we had to stay in formation past West India Quay down to the Greenwich Yacht club where we turned around a Port of London Marshal boat and headed up the north bank of the river to await entrance to the lock. You can imagine the chaos but we all had our locking position and new we would be in the second lock. Due to the cold several Ambulances were standing by to collect people in difficulty on smaller open boats thankfully only 6 people needed hospitalisation.

Once clear of the lock we found our mooring and got warm before partaking in some celebratory food and wine the end to a most memorable and fantastic day. "Thank you Eric"

By Gary Askam

Soar Boating Club

FEATURE ARTICLE

This article by Jean Robinson, the new North East Regional Secretary, gives a good account of the problems caused to boaters by this year's topsy turvy weather. Many thanks to Jean for sending this and please consider sending your boating stories for future publication. Ed

THE WETTEST DROUGHT EVER

Despite raised eyebrows at our chosen destination for this year's cruise ("There's no water down there, there are restrictions and closures"; "The Kennet and Avon is shut near Bath due to a damaged bridge"; "The Grand Union is shut at the summit due to lack of water") we decided to go ahead with our plans and change them if necessary as we went along.

Our plan was to go across the Leeds/Liverpool canal as we hadn't done it for a couple of years, followed by the Bridgewater, Trent and Mersey, Shroppie, Staffs and Worcester, Coventry and finally the Oxford. Our departure was delayed due to the break in the weather, putting the Calder and Hebble under flood conditions but we finally set off on May 5th with the aim of reaching the City of Oxford by Queenie's Jubilee weekend so as to pick up our 5 year old granddaughter, Georgia, for her first ever stay on the boat. 'You'll never get down there in that time' exclaimed one cynic. In fact we had days to spare which meant we could 'do' the touristy things in Oxford we didn't manage last year.

En route we met the same pessimism. 'There are terrible delays on the Oxford. WE'RE not going that way'. In fact we did have a wait but as it was expected and everyone was in good humour and the sun shone (it did, honest) did it matter? As one bloke said, "If you're in a hurry you should catch a train." 'Going to the Thames? It's all silted up from the flooding. You can't moor anywhere.' Wrong! We had no problems at all. On saying to one boating lady, who had been boating for more years than I'd had hot dinners, that we had chosen the Thames so that we wouldn't be on and off the boat to do the locks so safer for our granddaughter, the response was that there were very few lock keepers on the Thames now and you had to do it yourselves. Last year there had been lockies on all the locks so I was surprised to hear this. Once we were on the Thames we found that only one lock (Godstow, which is powered anyway) was unmanned. There were the smiling, friendly Lockies we had met last year.

And as for the drought conditions! Going up to Lechlade was a bit of a slog against the current but coming back down was like a slalom course. In fact all the way to Reading was rather like being on a water slide. The day after we entered the Kennet and Avon, the red boards went up on the Thames. But, selfishly, we didn't mind. We were at our destination. After wishing to be here for many years but not having had the time we had actually done it!



The 'drought' conditions continued with heavy rain; we never moved for one day after getting off the Thames. It poured for 36 hours and the River Kennet got higher and the river bank got lower and I half expected to end up in the field. We didn't and we slogged on to Hungerford where at last we no longer had the current to contend with. The Caen Hill Flight was completed in a fast time due to wonderful weather conditions and working well with another boat. The entry into Bath was fast and, despite the rain, we had 2 super days on the tourist trail of this beautiful city. We 'flew' into the channel leading to Bristol's floating harbour as they were 'scouring'. We didn't know what the lock keeper meant when he told us on the phone that they were scouring but that we'd be OK. We soon found out! 'Book in at the Harbour Office,' came the shout of the Lockie as he receded rapidly into the distance.

2 days later we'd 'done' Bristol, a vibrant, lively but wet city and set off back to Bath. The River Avon was high and getting higher so it was a bit slow going but we eventually got back onto the moorings below Poultney Weir. Rain, rain, rain!

After another 2 days of touring in the rain we got up to find the crew of a Sally hire boat had 'lost it' trying to get under the bridge below the weir and it was jammed solidly between the opposite bank and trip boat 'Penny Lane', completely blocking the river and looking as though it was about to keel over from the immense flow of water. The crew of youngish men (who had been drinking all night and had tried to get into our neighbours' boat at 3am because it was blue and so was their's) thought it hilarious and didn't understand why the trip-boat skippers, who had cancelled their own boat trips that day due to the dangerous levels and flow rate, made them leave their boat. After some considerable time of trying to free the boat the professionals hacked off the stern

fender and managed to release it and they then took it into the bottom lock of the Bath flight and saw the lads on their way. We then set off (he who must be obeyed said we couldn't afford to stay in Bath any longer; don't know what he meant) and, though a bit hairy, we got into the locks safely. Farewell River Avon; we SHALL be back!

Our final drought ridden experience (to date) was that the red boards were up for the Thames. After going very slowly towards Reading, a few miles a day, we were finally given the go ahead with the instruction that the boards were going to yellow at lunch time

As I write this epistle we are moored up at what we now call 'Our Field' in Henley on Thames. The cost of mooring has gone up by more than 50% and the seagulls are swimming in the middle of the field BUT the sun is shining and the BBC promise us that summer is coming this week

Jean Robinson (written on 21st July)

We welcome Lee Sanitation to our small but exclusive group of advertisers. In this issue you can see some of the products available from this well known supplier. As far as club needs go I was impressed with the pump out mobile unit which is available with 240 v operation for multiple use and looks like it is easy to use and stow away. I will be suggesting BMBC invests in one of these. (Ed)

The manufactures state

- For light commercial use, boat clubs and even for end-of-garden moorings, the easily transportable, electric pumped unit on its neat, stylish, two wheeled trolley provides storage for both suction and discharge hoses. Its all weather construction allows it to be stored outside, (where it can be seen as a visible support to commercial, environmental requirements) while its compact size allows it to unobtrusively fit almost anywhere.
- This product is powered by one of the company's well tested and proven 240V pumps and is fitted with a LeeSan ISO pump out probe. It will easily pump out the holding tank of the average boat direct to an adjacent foul sewer in just a few minutes.
- Additionally, since it features such a powerful pump, it can be used to empty water from flooded boats, bilges, etc., making it an ideal piece of equipment for all sorts of applications.
- This unit joins LeeSan's range of small pump out equipment which goes from a hand operated carry-on version to a powered pump trolley with its own built-in waste tank.
- Price £2,394.00
- Full details including videos can be found at www.leesan.com
Tel 01295 770000



Watch this space...



50th Anniversary

Rally

July 2014

National Raffle

To help fund the Rally a National Raffle will take place. Regions will be asked to donate the prizes

So check out all of your contacts and call in all those favours NOW!!

What exciting 'goodies' can your region lay their hands on to ensure that this Raffle is even better than the last?



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