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**COMING
VERY
SOON!**

**IT'S THE AWCC 50th
ANNIVERSARY RALLY**

11 - 12 -13th of July

THE EVENT OF THE YEAR!

THE CELEBRATION YOU HAVE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR!

**BEING HELD AT BLACK BUOY CRUISING CLUB AT KNOWLE ON THE
GRAND UNION.**

**IT IS STILL NOT TOO LATE TO ENTER THIS MAJOR EVENT
CONTACT ANN BANKS OR GO TO THE AWCC WEB SITE FOR ENTRY
DETAILS**

NATIONAL CHAIRMAN

AWCC National Executive Meeting 10 May 2014 Chairman's Report

There has been no major, national meetings to report during the period other than a gathering to discuss towpath sharing I reported earlier. The main objective was to provide additional input to the live consultation. Two items that created discussion being how to manage cycling, particularly in the conurbations and what needs to be installed by way of signage to encourage considerate behaviour. It was felt the onus is on the faster towpath users to give way to others and that signage should be simple and clear, unlike the current situation of a sometimes slightly ambiguous message. I was the lone boating representative and made the points that whilst we are happy to share it must be remembered that the waterways are a working environment with inherent dangers for the casual visitor. Locks, weirs and heavy moving boat are the obvious contenders. Education was felt essential with particular attention to the needs of the disabled, children and less mobile users. The consultation is just ending and we await the draft document for comment.

Alongside this consultation is the Towpath Mooring Project Management Project. This project covers all aspects and I recommend that you look at the latest bi-monthly update available on the CRT Website.

EA has streamlined its management structure to a form that is not unlike CRT. Unsurprising perhaps as there remains an underlying intention to transfer the waterways in due course. Richard Parry, in a recent meeting, confirmed that CRT remains ready to accept EA waterways under the correct terms. There is opposition from some EA Boaters, particularly on the Thames but it seems difficult to envisage how the EA can continue to provide the role of a navigation authority.

I am in the process of arranging a meeting with CRT to explore ways that AWCC clubs might be protected from future commercial development, and the importance of maintaining license agency status. AWCC and its clubs had a champion in Sally Ash and now that she is retiring we need to ensure the new person is equally on side. I would like to detail particular areas of concern or threat; perhaps you would give it some consideration please? This is important for the long term.

I have two meetings scheduled for early next month, the first a gathering of boating organisations to hear about enforcement and secondly a NAG meeting, agenda to be decided.

I have been asked by Stafford Boat Club to open its Golden Anniversary Celebrations in June. A great privilege. I very much look forward to attending Dunstable and District Boat Club's celebration event later in the day.

Paul Le Blique

REGIONAL REPORTS

London Region

Association of Thames Yacht Clubs

At the recent ATYC AGM Michael Shefras stood down as chairman. Michael has served for many years and is well respected on the river Thames David Jones is to take the helm together with many new committee members; the ATYC has 42 member clubs.

The Environment Agency is to slim down and remove one layer of management with the loss of 900 jobs

It is proposed by the E.A to collect accommodation fees for all structures on or in the river. Licence fees have suffered a 4.8% increase

The ATYC Rally is to be held in West India dock on August bank holiday weekend, however, the dock will be open to visitors from the 18th – 25th August to give time for some retail therapy in the capital.
There will be no Boat handling at this years event.

Canal & River Trust – Waterways Forum Meeting

This was held at the London Canal museum and was very well attended with over 80 people present. Jon Guest gave us the usual power point presentations. There is 4.5 million additional money to spend on the track. Volunteering work in our region has been most successful with over 50, 000 days worked, covering a range of jobs (painting, erecting new signs – C&RT, litter picking etc...), Many of the volunteers were Marks and Spencer employees

Licence evasion in London region is 6.5% and there are 1052 continuous cruising boats in our region.

After many promises in the past, dredging work is being carried out on the Slough Arm; this will enable more boats to attend the rally in September. We have been asking for this for many years (well done C&RT)

Cavalcade – Little Venice

This was again over subscribed with all the mooring being taken up. IWA put on another very good weekend.

TERRY GILLAM

REGIONAL REPORTS

NORTH EAST

Chairman's report to AWCC National meeting, Black Buoy

There have been no further N.E. Region meetings since our AGM held at Strawberry Island Boat Club in February, reported to the National AGM in Stafford. Our next meeting is next Wednesday evening May 14th., at South Pennine B.C.

I am pleased to advise that Aire & Calder Cruising Club, now down to a handful of members and expecting to disband, did take the decision at its March AGM, to continue operating as a club and to continue AWCC membership.

We missed the Manchester & Pennine User Group meeting at Dukinfield because of Jean's illness, but I did attend the North East Waterway User Forum held in Castleford, on April 7th. A presentation was given by Alex Holt, Principal C & RT engineer, on the proposed Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme which is due to start in September and take about 18 months to complete.

The River Aire weirs at Crown Point in the centre of the city, and at Knostrop, are to be replaced by new mechanically-operated tipping weirs so that flow rates in times of flood can be controlled more accurately. There will be extensive flood walls built back up through the city to Office Lock, the start of the Leeds / Liverpool Canal. Navigation closures are expected in the winter months this year and 2015 / 16, with month-long closures alternating with month-long open periods.

N.E. Waterway manager Jon Horsfall announced the successful completion of an extensive offside vegetation clearance project, with 31.1 km. of offside clearance & tree-cutting on the N.E. Waterways. 24 lock gates are due to be replaced in the N.E. over the next year. We shall see if there are marked improvements in making our region's locks more user-friendly!

Richard Parry held one of his "meet the boaters" open meetings in Leeds on March 13th. AWCC was well-represented, with members of 5 or 6 of the region's clubs being present, as well as Jean & me.

Hopefully the extensive complaints about the difficulties of lock and swing-bridge operation in the North-East, led him to question the Leeds C & RT staff. Indeed we understand that one of the hottest potatoes, persistent questioning about the hugely difficult Fall Ing Lock in Wakefield, led to attempts by a regional engineer to operate the lock herself. She later reported that it took several of her colleagues to actually work the lock! Previous complaints had led to C & RT suggestions that an 8-stone woman could operate this lock. It has to be said that complaints have been registered for well over 10 years, with no apparent rectification action being taken.

REGIONAL REPORTS

Jon Horsfall promised that staff would now visit and operate each lock on their part of the system to log any difficulties or maintenance issues. Please don't hold your breath too long, as it appears that many man-hours are expended in entering these issues onto the C & RT computer system which then prioritises jobs - by which time there are not sufficient man-hours left to actually do the work!

I am finding it increasingly frustrating that C & RT are making all the correct noises in their charm offensive towards boaters - but there then seem to be plenty of ready excuses advanced as to why promised works have not been carried out. Are staff members embracing the new regime, or simply continuing with the old BW mind-set??

Brighouse Canal Festival, August 30 / 31. - I recently circulated initial information to National Exec. Members, as well as to all clubs in North-East Region. Organisation is now well in hand and there is an embryonic website at www.brighousecanalfestival.co.uk for anyone interested in visiting. The local business people who are arranging the festival have been immensely successful with previous themed events, and hope to make this an annual attraction. Their 1940's weekend last June attracted over 100,000 visitors.

It has to be said that C & RT have been criticised by the organisers for the apparent lack of engagement in Brighouse - the meeting held last month was attended only by the lady who handles volunteering in N.E. Waterway region, and her feed-back to several questions raised, has been either vague, or in some instances unhelpful, despite the stated aim of the Partnership to attract as many people as possible to the waterways.

For any AWCC boaters attending Brighouse, we are hoping to arrange an "open weekend" at South Pennine Boat Club on the following weekend, September 6th. / 7th. to offer a barbecue and a "bit of a do" as we are situated only 3 miles or so down the Navigation from Brighouse.

GARTH ROBINSON

REGIONAL REPORTS

SOUTH EAST

Assessing Clubs Database.

Club members continue to request to access the Handbook details. Some Club Secretaries are still having difficulty being able to access their club's details on the A.W.C.C. database. Can Brian publish a list of instructions for Club Secretaries to follow to get into their clubs details?

The question was asked that if the Data Protection Act is the problem does the Handbooks contravene this with all the information in them.

Environment Agency.

The EA have published their plans outlining future transition restructuring and navigation management. More information should be forthcoming at the Regional Navigation Committee Meeting on the 15th May. It is feared that there could be redundancies in the Anglian region.

Crick Show.

Due to other club commitments the South-East Region are unable to supply any helpers to man the stall at the Crick Boat Show. We deeply regret this.

Dunstable and District Boat Club.

Celebrate their 50th. Anniversary in June and are holding a Birthday Week-end.

They have two vacancies for moorings which boats must be 40ft. or less.

Northampton Arm.

CRT have announced that there are no plans for dredging to take place in the near future inspite of requests from boaters. This is of some concern as the IWA plan to hold their National Rally in Northampton next year with an increase of boat traffic.

Survey.

Only one club in the South-East has returned completed AWCC Questionnaires.

Boaters Christian Fellowship.

Have held a special conference where the future of the Fellowship was discussed and how to attract a younger membership.

Anniversary Rally.

Sadly there has been little interest in the Rally from river clubs.

RALPH & JENNY SULLIVAN

REGIONAL REPORTS

SOUTH AND WEST

I attended a Local Waterway Forum in Devizes on 23 April 2014. Usually there are a lot of people representing walkers, anglers, boaters, cyclists etc but this time there were only about 20 of us present.

The Local Waterway Manager gave a Power Point presentation covering the Trust's New Vision and Value Strategy.

We were reminded to take part in the Survey regarding the Consultation on National Towpath Use.

We were given an update on income, net income forecast for 2013/14 is £83m – over £4m ahead of plan.

Needless to say there has been damage due to the floods over the winter. The Kennet and Avon Canal Trust donated £1000 to the Flood Relief project and are donating the ticket sales and donations on their four trip boats on 25 May. The river sections of the canal have been closed and reopened several times already this year.

The Local Mooring Plan was launched on 1 May, specifically this only covers the K&A from Bath to Caen Hill and all VMs will be changed to 48 hour; 20km annual minimum movement and boaters are to pass through, spreading time evenly between 14 neighbourhoods.

There has been little/no enforcement this year. For instance one boat has been on a 24 hour visitor mooring at Bradford on Avon since 2 February 2014 to date.

CRT are asking for volunteers to monitor boat movement, that information will then be used for enforcement action.

Yet another Pilot on the K&A is a review of boater facilities. There was much discussion regarding bins! With three sites having been removed over the last few years.

We were informed there is to be a meeting with Richard Parry in Devizes on 21 May.

At the beginning of April the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust were honoured to be presented with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (the MBE for Voluntary Groups) by HRH The Princess Royal. Arrangements were made for her to be presented to as many volunteers as possible in the 70 minutes she was with us.

Our Region held its AGM at Pewsey Wharf Boat Club with most Clubs having representation. The Wilderness Boat Club had only just joined us and was unable to find anybody able to be present; as I previously stated I am not sure what is happening with the Somerset Navigators Boat Club – nobody attended the AGM.

Pauline King

REGIONAL REPORTS

NORTH WEST

Llangollen Canal - Wrenbury

There is a proposal to build a 200 berth marina on the fields near to the church. This would have an impact on the village and could cause havoc at the electric lift bridge at Wrenbury Mill. The villagers are opposed to the scheme and have a web site. <http://www.savewrenbury.co.uk>

Trent & Mersey Canal - Billinge Green Farm

Work has now started on a proposed marina at Billinge Flash, near Orchard Marina. We opposed this proposal a couple of years ago but the developer must now have permission. They have erected a 'silt boom' across the flash and are excavating the silt from the flash.

Vegetation Control

There has been a considerable amount of vegetation control on the offside from Middlewich to Anderton. They seem to have concentrated on medium & small branches. Work finished early this year because of the bird nesting season but the money is ring fenced for the Autumn.

Richard Parry Presentation – Anderton 1st April 2014

I attended this event. Richard introduced himself, experience etc and presented a list of positives items since CRT was created. He then answered questions for over an hour supported by the Waterway Managers.

CRT User Group Meetings

I attended the M&P meeting at Dukinfield in March. They have now started to issue notes from the meeting at the following meeting. I have asked them to issue them around 2 weeks after the meeting.

I failed to attend the Wales & Border Counties User Forum but Nick has obtained copies of the pre-submitted questions'.

Fire Kills Campaign – Boat Safety Week

I have received a Fire Service briefing document about a campaign being held on 26th – 30th May. I don't know any information about local events or Fire Service presence at marinas etc.

Winsford Regatta 19th – 21st September

This event will be held on the Winsford Flash and have a wartime theme. Anyone requiring details please contact me.

BRYAN POLLARD

REGIONAL REPORTS

MIDLANDS REPORT TO NEC MAY 2014

With the onset of the cruising season, regional activity has been less. Clubs have been kept up to date by email. Erica liaised with Midlands Reps and has produced an update of the Rep's job description. A copy is appended to this report and comments are welcomed. In Midlands, the majority of our Reps are very long-serving, with great knowledge of the waterways in their area. New Reps report that they were well briefed by the outgoing Rep then welcomed and supported by the Region.

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Randal Heard, long-serving Rep for Norbury CC, attended the West Midlands Local Customer Forum in Birmingham on Tuesday 29 April, and reported in detail which I précis.

The meeting attracted only twenty attendees, of which nine were CRT – a shame as it was the most interesting and informative meeting for years. All attendees contributed to the discussion, not centred on the CRT/IWA relationship. The new openness could be because the Manager is participating in a national work party – 'The Vision for the Charity' – on changing from an engineering-based organisation to one attracting a wider section of the public, who it is hoped will be encouraged to support future funding initiatives.

Ian Lane, Acting Manager, took the Chair and gave the latest proposals many of which the C&RT attendees were hearing for the first time.

1. Broad Outline

- Vision - Living waterways transform places and enrich lives.
- Values - Caring, openness, local involvement, excellence.
- Strategy - How to achieve our Vision. (A ten year strategy coincides with the next Government financial settlement).
- Goals - Waterways, places, prosperity, people, influence, resources.
- Resources - Keeping staff.
- Principles being rolled out this week followed by six months discussion.

2. Waterway Updates

- Summer and Winter Stoppages.
- Volunteers contributed 25,434 hours in West Midlands, lockkeepers 8000hrs. They need more volunteers.
- Special attention to dredging and remedial work to metal bridges.
- Birmingham Cycle Revolution - £6m from the City of Birmingham to improve inner city towpaths radiating from the city centre, each individual project appropriately called a 'spoke'.
- Third party works - aim to provide additional financial support to the charity.
- Major contract work - major saving using national Contracts.
- Enforcement activities - Now operating on a 14 day cycle.

REGIONAL REPORTS

3. Conservative Party Conference in central Birmingham 28th September to 1st October 2014. Expect stoppages and boat searches as per last occasion.

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Two major events in Midlands this summer, first Stafford BC's Golden Anniversary boat gathering [13-15 June] followed of course by our own Golden Jubilee Rally at Black Buoy CC [12-13 July] of which we shall doubtless hear more later. Stoke on Trent BC is holding open days next weekend and jointly with the North Staff/South Cheshire Branch of the IWA, a Community Day at Cheddleton on the Caldon Canal, on Sunday 28 September. Both events commemorate the 40th anniversary of the re-opening of that canal. Coventry CC holds its ever-popular strawberry tea 19-20 July, and Tamworth CC holds a boater's weekend 2-3 August.

...

Although not directly waterways-related, it no doubt recognises her work for the network. Stella Machin, Stafford BC Rep and Secretary, has been given the honour of joining the Guild of Freemen Burgesses of Stafford. Their 800 year old charter did not allow women members until last year, so Stella is one of the first. A great honour. There will be a piece for Alert in due course, after the parade taking place today.

...

I would ask the NEC please to note that Midlands has meetings booked for 4 October and 10 January 2015. We are waiting to be told the date of the 2015 AGM so that we can arrange regional meetings.

IAN WOOD

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Any views, opinions or comments expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the policy of the AWCC.

CLUB NEWS



Some months ago, Stella Machin, Rep and Secretary of Stafford BC, (Center of picture) was proud and honoured to be sworn in by the Mayor of Stafford to the Guild of Freemen Burgesses' of Stafford (not to be confused with being given the Freedom of a town or city). As the name suggests the vast majority of Freemen are men but in 2013 they changed the 800 year old charter to include women so a handful were sworn in at the same time. The 10th May is the Mayor making parade through Stafford and Guild members have been invited to take part in their gowns. The timing of the mayor making parade did not allow Stella to attend Midlands' meeting, and understandably, the parade took precedence. This is a great honour for Stella and for AWCC Midlands and we send our congratulations to her.



Bridgewater Motor Boat Club Member, Emily Harding, made a big splash in more ways than one when she accidentally slipped into the canal at Castlefields in Manchester while helping husband Peter tie up their boat. She was rescued by two passers by who left before she could thank them and is trying hard to find them to pass on her thanks. The local Manchester Evening News picked up on the story and she ended up as front page news. Emily is pictured here receiving her official Mermaid Award at a subsequent Club meeting, an award given to all BMBC members who go searching for those mythical creatures while out boating. (Ed)

CLUB NEWS

Ashby Canal Association

On 17th April a successful event was held at our Snarestone site when two working boats “Aquarius” and butty “Ilford” (which is over 100years old and beautifully restored) were each loaded with 18tons of proper loose coal (courtesy of UK Coal who are working the nearby Minorca Opencast mine on the site of the former Measham Colliery).

Sheeted up properly, and deep loaded they made a fine sight. Many onlookers had never before seen boats loaded with loose coal.

The pair of boats then set off on a tour of the waterways system to help publicise the next stage of restoration of the Ashby Canal. The first port of call was Alvecote. The boats then traveled on the T & M to the Etruria Canal Festival . From there they head for Croxley (former site of Dickinson’s Paper Mill) via the Grand Union. The last load of Measham coal in the early 1970s was delivered by water from the Ashby to Dickinsons – this trip aims to recreate that run.

After touring other parts of the system, they will end up at the Park Head Rally (Dudley Tunnel) in September.

Thanks to AWCC for publicising the event in Alert.

John Roddis. Ashby Canal Association



#BoatFireSafety2014 –

Ten Top Tips To Take On Board Today

With the mix of fuels and combustibles materials all packed into a relatively small space, boat owners know they have to take extra care.

Here are ten pointers linked to everyday activities aboard your boat that will help to keep you and your crew safe

- Test the boat's smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms
- Have a fire action plan, everyone on board should know the plan and be clear on what they each should do if there's a fire or CO incident
- Make sure the escape routes are clear. Never lock or bolt doors and hatches on the outside while you're aboard
- Whenever possible, turn gas-valves off before you go to bed or leave the boat
- Keep the galley attended when cooking. Don't cook while tired – note that the effects of alcohol, drugs and medications can cause drowsiness and may affect your judgement
- Smokers should dispose of cigarettes carefully. Make sure you've put them out, right out. Take care with lit candles – only use secure holders
- Keep fabrics like curtains, cleaning cloths, tea towels, etc far enough away from cooking hobs and heating stoves to prevent them from charring and catching fire
- Be extra cautious when refuelling with petrol. First, get all the crew ashore (they should only re-board when the engine is re-started and running smoothly)
- Put out naked flames - turn off the engine and any cooking appliances. Then close doors, windows or hatches and any awning or pram-covers
- Replace the filler cap, clean up any fuel spillages and ventilate the engine space completely before turning the ignition key or switch

For more tips and advice to help you and your crew stay safe go to