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## National Chairman

It has been a fairly quiet period over the summer but the event that stood out was, of course, the Golden Anniversary Rally at Black Buoy CC. What a weekend it turned out to be with superb entertainment, catering and attendance. We have received nothing but positive comment from attendees be they boaters, traders, entertainers or members of the public. There is little say that has not already been voiced except perhaps to offer my congratulations to all who worked so hard to make this event such a memorable achievement.



## NATIONAL CHAIRMAN

The other thing that struck me is the difference in fortunes between CRT and EA. CRT is buoyant with a bright future whereas EA struggles with lack of funding threatening infrastructure and job security alike. It is true credit to EA staff who maintain a cheerful presence in these times. It will be such a step forward when the government decides the future of EA Navigations.

CRT is about to issue an updated version of the Boaters Handbook that will be distributed to all license holders.

The trust has appointed Dean Davis as acting Head of Customer Services, a post that now covers Head of Boating previously occupied by Sally Ash. I am sure we all welcome Dean and look forward to his influence. One of his many tasks is to review Customer Service Standards which are loosely defined at best do not stand close scrutiny in today's world.

Dean will also be overseeing the new boat licensing arrangements aimed at a reduction in process costs whilst simplifying renewal procedures.

Thoughts from the chair:

I expect you will recall that during the early days of CRT we discussed a formal relationship between the Trust and AWCC. Following discussions it was decided the time was not right due to the new administration, then CEO and management structure. Now that we have a new CEO and Head of Boating, I believe now is the time to reconsider.

Several boating groups have agreed MOU's or declared themselves "critical friends" of the trust and whilst I would not suggest that AWCC necessarily follows course, there are unique aspects of our relationship with CRT that deserve consideration.

Topics that spring to mind,

1) To protect License Agency status. Most clubs are registered agents for CRT License issue, gaining financial benefit from the privilege. There is no suggestion that CRT is about to change that status but it will certainly be reviewing the process, particularly in the light of several BWML sites being no longer prepared to issue licences and other marinas following suite. CRT is also looking to reduce the cost of issuing boat licenses. Perhaps we should consider agreements whereby clubs guarantee, for example, 100% compliance in exchange for retaining agency status? This would remove the requirement for CRT to check several thousand boats. There may be other trading topics to consider.

2) To regularise lease agreements between clubs and CRT. At present there are as many forms of lease of lease agreements as there are tenant clubs. There is no consistency of pricing evaluation, terms or renewal detail. This often results in expensive and time consuming legal negotiation when review and renewal times are imminent, and creates a feeling of insecurity for individual clubs. There will be benefit in agreeing a form of model lease with easily understood details in order to streamline and reduce renewal times and expenditure for both parties. It is likely that small variations will be necessary in some cases but these should be minimal.

I have mentioned the above topics to CRT with favourable results and suggest we consider the actions

3) AWCC has always responded to consultation documents. As a government owned body BW was obliged to consult on matters of major policy change. As a charitable trust, CRT does not have the same liability but has decided to continue the process. AWCC has responded to all consultations via a sub-group consisting of David, Geoff, Dick and myself. The situation has changed of course but we need to reform this group in order to ensure our views are considered.

# REGIONAL REPORTS

## South & West Region

A quiet season so not a lot to report. No Canal User Forum since the spring. Works have been taking place on the Long Pound above Pewsey to reinstate the bank, unfortunately the CRT work boats moored on the wharf and took delivery of large amounts of stone; the weight of this has caused the wall to become unstable (bricks have been falling out over a number of years – but you only see this if you are on a boat) and work to repair the problem are not going to take place before next year.

I went to the AWCC 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations at Black Buoy, thanks to all who made it a great weekend – I have never done so much washing up! Unfortunately only two boats from this Region attended but we did have one winner from the raffle.

Good news from Bradford on Avon – the hairdressing boat has ceased trading and left the mooring. Bad news is that Susie Mercer still wants to use the mooring for a permanent trader. It has been agreed that she will speak to the Local Waterways Partnership before giving a licence to another business.

CRT have produced a Summary Report on the K&A Local Plan (1 May-31 July 2014). I understand CRT are happy with the results but I travel between Bradford on Avon and Avoncliff on a regular basis and I am not so sure that this is really working. The report is available on CRT's website.

At our last Regional meeting Burghfield Island raised a point asking for better communication between the EA and CRT in as much as boats were leaving the Thames during the floods to be confronted with the Kennet Navigation being closed. I spoke to Richard Parry at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and asked who I should speak to about this problem. He expressed surprise that I said there was a lack of communication between the two bodies but told me to speak, in the first instance, to the Local Waterway Manager. It is impossible to speak to him by phone so I emailed him, I did not get a response but thought he could be on holiday and left it a month before sending the email again – still no response. I mentioned the problem to a member of the Local Waterways Partnership who was able to tell me he has been working with CRT on the very problem and things should improve this winter.

As you all know David will cease to be the Region's President soon but he is hoping at our next meeting to find a "willing volunteer".

**Pauline King**

# REGIONAL REPORTS

## North-East Region

Our last Regional Meeting was held on Wednesday May 14<sup>th</sup>. following the National meeting at Black Buoy. 16 people attended, representing 7 of the Region's clubs, and apologies were received from 5 further member clubs.

Concerns continued to be voiced about the much-cancelled work to replace the unsafe lock landing at Fairies Hill - but following e-mail exchanges with the N.E. Waterways Manager Mr. Jon Horsfall, Gerry Riley of White Rose B.C., and I had a site meeting with the CRT engineer responsible, Dilwyn Parry, and he seems to have jumped on the sub-contractors who had omitted to obtain permission from Lafarge to use their wharf for loading / unloading. When Jean & I set out in mid-June, works were under way, and on our return in mid-August we were treated to the sight of a splendid new pontoon landing! And all this after only a 5-year campaign.

West Stockwith Lock had failed paddle gear causing a near 1-hour turnaround time, a very dangerous situation when boats have only a narrow tidal window available to them, and no safe waiting or mooring place on the River Trent. The gear failure was exacerbated by "random" inexperienced part-time lock-keepers being used following the sad death earlier in the year, of the permanent keeper. West Stockwith Yacht Club were getting little support from the Waterway Manager, and so called an emergency meeting of concerned clubs and organisations, resulting in a strong letter being sent to Mr Richard Parry.

Several weeks later I was about to pass this matter to Paul for his intervention with CRT who had failed to reply to the letter, when we learned that in fact repairs had been carried out, and a permanent lock-keeper appointed.

Aire & Calder Cruising Club had decided despite falling numbers and an ageing membership, that they would continue as a Club, and would renew AWCC membership.

In June, we heard that Bethells Bridge Boat Club on the Driffield Navigation, had disbanded. We have however had a membership enquiry from a newly-formed Club Rotsea Carr Boat Club on the Driffield. Jean has sent AWCC information and an invitation to our Regional meeting on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup>. September.

There have been no User Group / Customer Forum meetings over the Summer. The N.E. Waterways meeting has been scheduled inconveniently in the middle of the school half-term holiday in late October.

The first Brighthouse Canal – Craft – Folk Festival went ahead at the end of August with about 25 boats attending, and thousands of visitors over the 2 days. CRT engagement was minimal as reported to the last meeting. Indeed, it almost appears they were trying to be unhelpful, as they painted the mooring bollards on the Friday afternoon just as visiting boats were arriving, so we now have black and white striped mooring lines. On the Saturday morning they painted the handrails over lock gates which were to be crossed that day by hundreds of visitors. And the skips provided for boaters' rubbish were completely overflowing before the start of the Festival. I have been asked to bring up these failings at the next Customer Forum, and to try for more involvement by CRT at next year's event.

**Garth Robinson**

# REGIONAL REPORTS

## London Region

### SLOUGH ARM

C&RT have been very busy carrying out dredging works on the arm I hope we get a good number of boats this weekend at the Slough Canal Festival to Show our appreciation for all the works on the arm.

### VEGETATION

We noticed on our trip to Black Bouy the very poorly maintained Towpaths. With vegetation over two feet high especially on the Staffs & Worcs. Canal. Where the grass had been cut it was allowed to fall in the canal and fouled The propeller it was just like very strong twine. I spoke to Richard Parry and he said He would look into it and the vegetation should not end up in the canal.

### BLACK BOUY

Black Bouy club members worked extremely hard to make our Golden Jubilee Rally Such a success everybody was made most welcome. I think all the committee and Members should be very proud of a job well done.

**Trevor Gillam**

## Midlands

As everyone is aware the AWCC Golden Jubilee rally was held at BBCC in July with good weather attracting a constant stream of visitors from outside the boating fraternity. 120 boats attended boosted by 11 boats from the floating market all very well dressed up with bunting and flags, making a spectacular sight from bridge 69 by the pub. I would like to say a big thank you to all at BBCC for the tremendous amount of work many members put in to ensure that the rally went ahead in a safe and tidy fashion. Also a big thank you to all AWCC members and wives/ husbands who also put in a fantastic amount of help. Ann's daughter Beverley did a brilliant job in the kitchen all weekend supplying breakfasts, cream teas, drinks, food Friday night and organised a pig roast for Saturday night. All in all I think the rally was a well success and even got a piece in Septembers Waterways World.

Elsewhere midlands clubs have been busy with various functions. Ashby canal association had a very successful event (copy/pics sent to Alert). Stafford holding their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary do, Coventry CC held their annual strawberry cream tea, Tamworth had their August boat gathering. So TBC have been working with the IWA North Staffs, South Cheshire and the Caldon + Uttoxeter Canals Trust on the Caldon 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reopening of the Caldon canal at the end of September.

**Ian Wood**

# REGIONAL REPORTS

## North West

### Vegetation Control

On my recent trip along the Staffs & Worcs Canal vegetation has been allowed to grow to 6-7 feet tall. I believe that CRT's policy is an annual cut to the waters edge. We witnessed the effects of this as all the vegetation finds its way into the canal. Not very good propellers could be increased weed hatch activity. I will raise the issue at M&P User Forum, is this national policy?

### Weed on the T&M

There is a return of the 'pennywort' weed on the northern section of the T&M. The main area affected is from Black Prince Hire Boat depot to near Preston Brook tunnel. This issue was to be resolved 2 years ago and then the Dutton Breach cancelled the work. This issue needs to be raised at the M&P User Group Meeting.

### Regional Reps – Job Description

The Job Description, discussed at the last NEC meeting in May has been issued to all Reps for comment.

### CRT User Group Meetings

CRT has been canvassing the views of attendees about the location and time of day the meetings are held. M&P may change to 2 geographical meetings and may move to daytime meetings. I am awaiting notification of any changes. Next meetings scheduled in October.

### Trent & Mersey Canal – Marinas

**Billinge Green Farm** (on off side) work has been undertaken to dredge the flash of contaminated silt. Work appears to have been suspended for the time being.

**Towpath side near Orchard Marina** Work in nearly completed, at the end of July they were about to connect the new marina to the canal

### Llangollen Canal - Wrenbury

There is a proposal to build a 200 berth marina on the fields near to the church. There was a proposal to count boat numbers in the summer to try and estimate the impact of a new marina on traffic flow. No results to date. <http://www.savewrenbury.co.uk>

### Winsford Regatta 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> September

This event was held on the Winsford Flash with a wartime theme.

**Bryan Pollard**

# COMMUNICATIONS

## **ALERT**

The electronic distribution system continues to work satisfactorily.

The Summer Version of ALERT was clicked by approximately 65% of Club and Personal subscribers, which is about the same as the last two editions.

We've lost about three Club subscribers over the last year, which is somewhat surprising. One hopes that they have found alternative ways of distribution copies to Club members.

## **Club Information Database/Handbook 2015**

I'd like to get a good early start on the 2015 handbook this year, so would be pleased if regional secretaries can assist in making sure that we have the latest information. I'd like to cut off information collection in mid November, with the intention of producing the 2015 handbook for distribution at the first NEC meeting in 2015. Exact dates will be sent to Regional Secretaries before the end of October. I'll liaise directly with regional secretaries on collecting the information.

I will put together for each Club Secretary details of their Club's login to the AWCC website to allow access to the electronic version of the Handbook, so they can confirm or change the details of who holds the username and password for their Club. I also intend to set up a separate set of logins for Club Reps, based on the current list of reps held on the database.

If Regional or Club secretaries have up-to-date information, can they let me have it. I aim to have both of these lists up to date by the end of November 2014.  
AWCC Website

Website running satisfactorily. I have had little opportunity to update the content of the site over the summer.

**Brian Rich**

# CLUB NEWS

## AWCC 50<sup>th</sup> at Black Buoy Cruising Club.

When Dunstable & District, Lee & Stort, St Pancras and Uxbridge Cruising Clubs began the AWCC in 1964, did they think it would still exist 50 years later?

To prove it does, Black Buoy hosted a superb weekend in July 2014. The weather was hot and sunny, plenty of boats booked in, a floating trade market came and the food was excellent. Ann Banks (organiser extraordinaire) and her willing helpers made it a memorable weekend.

Friday evening's entertainment had all in the marquee in tears of laughter for 1½hrs after Richard Parry, chief executive of the Canal & River Trust formally opened the weekend. He also came back on the Saturday and spent time listening to many boaters.

A Commodore or Past Commodore of the Founder Clubs were presented with a mounted plaque.

Bob & Bunty Langley from Lee & Stort CC who had attended the 40<sup>th</sup> by car, this time came in their boat Oasis together with Trevor & Rosemary Gillam from West London Motor CC in Triskids. (they came by boat for 40<sup>th</sup>). Being so close to Birmingham, that is where we went afterwards.

Meeting up with the Alert editor Graeme Bridge, all three came down the Hatton flight together. Graeme was heard to say his picture is not usually in the Alert!!!



Trevor Gillam in foreground. Graeme Bridge at the rear descending Hatton Flight

A big thank you to all who updated their AWCC pennant with the 50<sup>th</sup> one. Just a few remain, contact Terry Ariss: [tlariss@btinternet.com](mailto:tlariss@btinternet.com) 01494 452380.

Some clubs may also have some, contact your rep.

**Bob Langley Lee and Stort BC.**

## CLUB NEWS

### The Federation of Bridgewater Cruising Clubs

The annual rally of the Federation of Bridgewater Cruising Clubs was this year hosted by Sale Cruising Club, held at their moorings on the Bridgewater Canal.

The Rally site had to be a last minute decision made by the club after their arranged venue was suddenly not available giving little time to find a new site on which to hold the rally. The only option was for it to be transferred to the grounds of the club. This involved moving several tons of earth and uprooting many mature tree stumps and leveling off the ground. This in turn caused problems as the clubhouse is not attached to any roadway having to transport everything by a small chain ferry to the other side of the canal. One of the members said it was like having a role in the film of the 'Great Escape' as everyone had to find ways of depositing all the tons of earth which had to be moved. Up sprung raised flower beds, plant containers and beautiful flower beds, the rest had to be taken home by the members to add to their own gardens (two bags per member). The result is both stunning and provides a great place for future venues.

The weather was not on the side of the rally as nearly 150 boats arrived in one of the wettest Bank Holidays known to the rally. Boats still came from all along the Bridgewater Canal bringing their crews all in party mood and sure of a good weekend. The bar was a welcome meeting point for boaters who regularly meet on this weekend every year to natter and catch up on the canal gossip between Worsley and Runcorn. The Entertainment was first class and occupied most of the weekend as well as games, quizzes and things to buy or try your luck on. There were the usual dog shows and Commodore's games, all held in the pouring rain. Boats were entered for various trophy's, Best Decorated, Trimmiest Craft and Crew and best Illuminated boat. The trophy's are taken back to their clubs were they hold them for 12 months until the next federation Rally. The theme for this years rally was Brazilian Carnival.

Hilary Foster (Federation of Bridgewater Cruising Clubs)



The children standing on 'Cheshire Lad' waiting in the pouring rain hoping to win Best Decorated Boat Trophy.

# CLUB NEWS



Two boats shared the Walter King Trophy, a good deed award. Both had saved members of the public who had fallen into the canal late at night and were not able to get out of the water

Adrian Marsland off 'Gemma Eve ' and Kerry Batty off the boat 'Arial'



Winner of the trophy for Trimmiest Craft and Crew won by the boat 'Turbulance' from Lymm Cruising Club being presented by FBCC Chairman Geoff Hollies.

Photos by Doug Wildman

Report by Hilary Foster (Federation of Bridgewater Cruising Clubs)

## CLUB NEWS

### **AYLESBURY CANAL SOCIETY MOVES INTO NEW CLUB FACILITIES BUILDING**

The new facilities building and club headquarters for Aylesbury Canal Society at Circus Field basin on the edge of Aylesbury was formally handed over to Society Chairman Bryan Barnes (left) on 12 September by Peter Hubbard of the builders, Lodge Park Construction Limited.



Some landscaping and internal fitting out works remain for the Society to complete but members transferred the Society's goods and chattels from its temporary accommodation to the new HQ at a well-attended and very busy working party over the weekend of 13/14 September.

The £1.7m new building, partly funded by the sale of the Society's previous lease on the town basin in Aylesbury and by a substantial bank loan, will provide a new headquarters for the Society, after over 40 years in an adapted prefabricated home dating back to the aftermath of World War 2. The building contains a Function Room, boaters' laundry and shower facilities, workshops and two docks.

The first floor Function Room, with lift access and an internal capacity for 300 people, leads to a balcony with views overlooking the Aylesbury Arm and across the Society's basin which accommodates some 40 members canal craft and provides space for visiting boats. There is a bar in the Function Room and supporting toilet facilities are also adjacent.

The laundry contains two washing machines and two tumble dryers while the three showers include one suitable for wheelchair users. All will be available to visiting boaters who can expect the usual ACS welcome on arrival.

The indoor, temperature controlled and ventilated wet dock is over 72 ft long and will accommodate a boat with an air draught of up to 2.2 m, beneath the automatic folding door. 3200 psi pressure washer, are included as part of the docks' hire charges.

## CLUB NEWS

Dock users are also provided with separate toilet and shower facilities and a rest room with equipment for coffee and light meals away from the working space.

Receiving the keys to the new building Chairman Bryan Barnes said “Handover of our new headquarters building marks the culmination of a long and complex process triggered by the



Aylesbury Waterside development. It opens a new and exciting chapter in the Society’s history but we will continue to promote the use of the Arm and to welcome visiting boats as we always have done. We look forward to seeing old friends and new faces at Circus Field and hope that many canal users will be able to join us for the official opening celebration and Bicentenary of the Arm in 2015”

*Aylesbury Canal Society was founded in 1971 and promotes the use of the Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union Canal.*

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