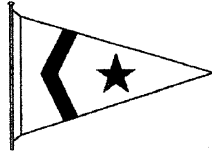


THE BLUE STAR NEWS.



Newsletter of the Middle Nene Cruising Club. Winter 2011

FROM THE COMMODORE - Bernard Morton.

As I write this, it has been a little over two months since the AGM and I became Commodore. I would like to start by thanking my predecessor, David Higgins, for all his hard work over the past two years. We have an excellent Committee with a lot of familiar faces plus one new one, namely Robert Seery, who I'd like to welcome on board. Gerry Skipper Byer became our new Vice Commodore and will, for the time being, continue to act as Secretary as well. Obviously, we need to find a new Secretary as soon as possible so if you are interested in taking on this important role, please contact me for further details.

On the entertainment front, I would like to express my thanks to Ryan and Tamsin Smith who have done a great job as entertainment co-ordinators for several years but have now decided to step down. John and Liz White have volunteered to fill their shoes and have hit the ground running having already come up with a 14 month programme of events. This will allow us all to put these dates into our diaries so there can be no excuses for missing Club events!! There are two events I'd particularly like to draw your attention to: the first is the Ashton BBQ on Saturday, 19th May – an ideal opportunity for us to get out on our boats for a club cruise. The second is the Commodore's Dinner Dance on Saturday 9th September which will be held in our club marquee. Do keep an eye on our website and noticeboards for further details.

Our new broadband link, as mentioned at the AGM, is up and running and available in the Club House (bar and wardroom). Linked to this are four new outdoor security cameras, which are trained on the main gate. Titchmarsh Lock (covering access from the field), the top bank and the small pool, including the track alongside. The system allows any Committee member to monitor the club site and has already proved its worth. The editor, Mike Elmhirst, spotted a person attempting to climb over the main gate and immediately drove to the Club. He confronted the individual who claimed that he thought it was a marina and that he wanted to find out what boats were for sale! We have plans to put signs on the main gate and the fence by the lock to ensure that outsiders are aware the club site is monitored 24/7. Remember, the system is there to improve security and protect Club premises and property as well as members' boats and possessions. Additional cameras are planned to cover the big pool and storage/skip areas.

Also at the AGM, I highlighted the need for a thorough revision to the Club Rule Book to be completed in time for the next AGM. To this end, our Rear Commodore David Higgins, Clive Dawson, John White and myself will be meeting on a regular basis to complete this task so that our recommendations can be put to the AGM in September 2012 for approval.

Xmas is just around the corner and a timely reminder, after our unusually mild autumn weather, don't forget to winterise your boats – winter must surely arrive soon! I thought last year I had done that but forgot to drop the shower head and hose into the shower tray draining the water out of the hose, that cost me a new shower mixer ..be warned!!

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you all for your support of our club this year and to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year? Hope to see you all at the Christmas Party on 17th December!!

From the Site Manager – Dave Wright.

Just a quick note to thank all Members that attended the Autumn Work Party. It was a good turn out, and a lot of tasks completed. And thanks also to all the Ladies that fed and watered us so well. In all, a great day, thanks to you all. Please note that the next Work Party is :-

March 24th. 2012.

From the Harbourmaster - Dave Warner.

Hello, and welcome to all our new Members. I hope you've enjoyed this season's boating with us at MNCC, and other Associated Clubs up and down the river. Over the next few Winter months, the river may rise and fall quite rapidly without too much warning. We tend to have small flash floods. Please can you all ensure that you have adequate warps and ground tackle to hold your boat secure on its mooring.

Please note that boats on the top bank, above the lock, should have a length of chain added to your mooring system on the upstream side of the mooring. Hopefully, this should stop your boat reaching the lock should it break free. Should you require assistance, just ask and I'll be pleased to help. Also, I'd like to advise that all moorings are now taken, so we have no mooring vacancies. We are up to our target of 100 boats.

Forthcoming Events – from our new Entertainments Team, John and Liz White.

- 2011.** Dec. 17th. Christmas Party, with the Christmas Draw (Tickets on sale now in the Bar.) , plus Bottle Draw and Fun and Games. Bring a plate. (For new Members, this means a plate with food on it. Ed.)
- Dec. 31st. New Year's Eve Party. Wayne's Disco. Fun and Games. Bring a plate.
- 2012.** Jan. 14th. 'Brain of the Nene' Quiz at MNCC. Rolls will be available.
- Feb. 11th. Valentines Night.
- March 24th. Work party.
- March 31st. Fitting - out Supper.
- April 7th. & 8th. Easter.
- May 19th. Club BBQ at Ashton Cut.
- June 2nd., 3rd., 4th., 5th. ANRC Rally at PYC.
- June 23rd. Race Night .
- July 21st. Family Fun Day.
- Sept. 8th. Commodore's Dinner Dance.

Sept. 15th. Sailing Club visit and BBQ .

Sept. 30th. AGM.

Oct. 13th. Work Party.

Oct. 27th. Halloween & Laying-up Supper.

Nov. 3rd. Bonfire and Guy Fawkes.

Dec. 15th. Christmas Party.

Dec. 31st. New Year's Party.

From the Membership Team – Adrian Cleave and Linda Seery.

During recent events, it has been noticed that there are a number of dinghies located around the Club, and nobody, including the Harbourmaster, knows to whom they belong. To make sure they can be identified with their rightful owners, would members owning a dinghy or tender please make themselves known to Linda Seery, who will issue them with a numbered sticker to fix to the vessel. Those boats not identified could be disposed of, particularly those in need of maintenance. There is no charge for keeping a dinghy or tender at the Club, but we do need to know to whom they belong.

Thank you in anticipation

A big welcome to the following new Members !

Tim, Hanna, Naomi, & Luke Jeffrey. Boat - 'Kingfisher'
Bayo Ogunro. Boat - 'Wait'
David & Trudi Cox. Boat - 'Dusty'.

We all hope that you have a long and enjoyable membership of Middle Nene Cruising Club.

No, relax, read the writing, its NOT a pub sign !

This is the logo for the new Charity planned to take the place of British Waterways in April 2012, a sort of National Trust arrangement for the inland waterways currently administered by BW. The logo itself was designed by Pentagram, a major design consultancy, who are also doing the 'branding' of the new organization, free of charge. And, it is reassuring to note that a 'Canal-loving Canine' is being auditioned to assist with the launch, complete with poop scoop, we hope ! No problems there, then.

Assuming the transition takes place as planned, the Canal & River Trust (CART) will be steered by a Member's Council, to be made up of a wide



range of interested parties, including boaters, to supervise a Board of Trustees, who will run things. Local committees will be set up, involving all those with a vested interest in their local waterways, and Chairs of these regional bodies will sit on the Member's Council. As the whole thing appears to be an effort by central Government to save money, 'volunteering' will be the order of the day, so if you want to be a lock-keeper, now's your chance. Talking about money, how's CART going to be funded? As a Charity, funding should be more flexible, but Government grants, boat licences, third party grants, and commercial activities, will all contribute. A new feature is the setting-up of a long-term, fixed, funding contract with Government, which will make long-term planning easier. The offer 'on the table' at the moment is £39 million per year, subject to ongoing negotiations between DEFRA and the Transition Trustees. But this is NOT ENOUGH according to informed sources, and partly due to a backlog of repair and maintenance work throughout the system. But is it going to work? No telling really, is there? Local involvement can't be bad, though looking at the list of people that could be in the CART makes you wonder if boaters are going to play a minor role.

And us river people? In February this year, the Waterways Minister (?) announced that the Environment Agency's navigations would transfer to the new waterways Charity in 2015/2016, providing funding can be obtained, and subject to the complete agreement of the Trustees. A few provisos there by the look of it!. But if the EA do lose their navigations to the Trust, and maintain core functions such as national flood control and the environment, we could end up with a small, locally-run, navigation - dedicated operation, with the ability to raise their own finance, which can't be all bad. So - Licence harmonization? Not more having to buy a Gold or visitor's licence to go on the canals? Lose the sea toilets on the Great Ouse? Again, we'll see!

BUT – as of January 2012, the EA are increasing their River Licence costs by 6.3% One reason given in their handout of 7th. November 2011, quote :- 'We are doing this to reduce our reliance on public funding, and to provide a sustainable future for our navigations going forward (hate that phrase!) **regardless of who manages and operates them**' Surely a bit of a giveaway there – its going to happen, and the EA are making their beds accordingly..

Maybe we should consider including all boat owners into a Charitable Trust, the BBBT (Bloody Broke Boaters Trust), or something similar? Or just hop on the CART and see what happens? Or wait for the bar to open, and think about it then!

What is in a name? By Martin Hampson.

Some 20 years ago (was it really that long ago!?) I bought a Mayland Family 16 named 'Outhouse Mouse'. Odd name I thought for a boat, but as it is meant to be bad luck to change the name I kept it as it was. This was my first motor boat and The Mouse was on a mooring at Hardley on the river Yare in the Norfolk Broads.



Much was the fun had with the boat, night navigation coming back down the river at 1 or 2 am! No locks and only the reeds to hit, no other boats!

The boat was in use most weekends and it even did a couple of trips around the Northern Rivers of the broads. One of which was on loan to a friend who would have needed an oil well to have brought his petrol powered boat up from Felixstowe Ferry to join us.

Mouse along with several other boats was used for giving Sea Cadets boat handling experience and survived! Funniest remark was made by a townie type cadet :- 'ere sir that bird just bugged off under water'! A grebe had just dived!

Mouse did gain some notoriety in as much as a river inspector referred to it as 'That little yellow boat that is always moored up outside The Red House'. Mouse wasn't always moored there. It must have been coincidence that Mouse was often there when he went past!

On a trip down to the Duke's Head at Somerleyton as I was mooring up, I was approached by a chap who remarked 'That is an unusual name, is it named after an American WW2 bomber?' All I could say was 'Pass!'

The older you get, the more comfort you need. They do say that you need a foot of boat for every year of age. I could neither afford nor single handle a 50 foot Broom or Sunseeker! Didn't like the look of them either!

I bought a 25 foot Colvic Watson up on the Broads and poor old Mouse suffered from lack of use.

Eventually I decided that I didn't need two boats on the Broads so in 2002 I joined Northampton Boat Club and Mouse was trailered down to the Nen. (Nen from the source to Peterborough, then the Nene from there to the mouth.(??) There is a school of thought that says the Nene starts at Thrapston!) (**As you should know, Martin, it bloody well does ! Ed.**)

Mouse was sorely in need of a refit. Poor little thing hadn't been out of the water for over 10 years



And so the work started Gaz*, Olley and I got in. stuck and a complete strip out refit was done. (* Gaz = Gareth). (Ed.) .



Now that Mouse was looking good, I did a trawl of the Internet and came up with the information that Out House Mouse was indeed a named B-17 of the 91st bomb group based at Bassingbourn. The name came about from a remark made by a lady visitor to Bassingbourn who hailed from the Mid West of America who when she saw the 'organised chaos' of the running of the station remarked 'it is like the chaos of mice in an outhouse'

The photo of the aircraft showed the nose art and a bit more digging came up with the artist as being Tony Starcer. Tony Starcer based his mouse on Jerry of 'Tom and Jerry' fame



I sent an email to the 91st Bomb Group website enquiring as to whether there was a decent picture of the nose was available. A couple of hours later, back came a really lovely file that I was able to use to get a vinyl done to put on the boat.

And here is finished Mouse at Doddington Lock.

Mouse moved down to Willy Watt Marine at Ringstead so was still on the Nene! Mouse was later sold to Gaz for the price of the new canopy. It wasn't till sometime later I had undercharged him by £200! However, Mouse had been worth every penny I had spent.

Eventually Gaz joined MNCC and that is how Mouse arrived.

Mouse is certainly a well travelled boat having covered the complete broads system apart from the North Walsham & Dilham Canal. Allegedly bits of it can be done in a canoe. Mouse has done the full length of the Nene down to Dog in a Doublet, the Middle Levels and the Great Ouse as



far down as Priory Marina at Bedford. Mouse has also had a foray onto the Grand Union from Northampton as far south as Linslade.

Mouse is having a new trailer built which will enable a raid to be carried out on the Thames and Kennet and Avon and maybe even further afield.

I am glad to say that Gaz and Holly are getting good use from the Mouse and are enjoying the boat as much as I did all those years ago.

MEMO FROM SANTA.

To :- all MNCC Members. cc. The Elves.

Worried about what to buy for your nearest and dearest ?

You still have time to order Club clothing for last minute presents.

One call to Santa's little helpers (Carol on 07795 124021, or Tony on 07795 124020) by **Monday 12th. December**, and your Order will be ready for the Christmas Party night, Dec. 17th. Garments with Club logo ONLY can be changed if the size is wrong, but once personalised with boat names, etc., Santa will not take them back ! Orders will be taken and delivered as discretely as possible.

POLOS, SWEATSHIRTS, HOODIES, FLEECES.

Breaking news !!! A lock-in at Middle Nene Cruising Club! (From a Blue Star News reporter.)

It was Saturday morning and I was on the boat, moored outside the Green Hut, doing some overdue tidying-up, when I heard some strange sounds coming from round the corner – something or someone showing distinct noises of distress. Ignored it in the usual public-spirited way for a while, then, as the volume and intensity increased, went round the corner to investigate. The noises were, in fact, human voices coming from the old stable where the marquee storage is, and now, words could be made out. ‘Help !!!’, was a favourite, followed by ‘Let us out !!’. But the clincher was ‘ I need a wee!!!’, and this spurred me into action. Opened the door, and four well-known Club Members (2 couples) exited in stampede mode, one ex-damsel in distress heading smartly for the loo. All sorts of unworthy thoughts came to mind, but, what had happened was they had all gone in there on Club business, and the door has blown shut, engaging both outside latches, which could not be accessed from the inside. Hence the lock-in !! Phone calls were made to all and sundry from inside, but to no avail, until a knight in grubby armour appeared from round the corner. **True story !** Funny at the time. The two couples have been granted anonymity pending blackmail ! Puts a whole new meaning to ‘A stable relationship’ doesn’t it ?

Editorial bit.

Thanks to all those who contributed to this edition, whether voluntarily or having been hassled. Contributions are always very welcome, preferably to do with boating, such as accounts of a holiday trip, disasters, boat renovation stories, or whatever. **Come on you newer Members ! Let’s have something from you !** Contact me, Mike Elmhirst, NB ‘Dick Terrapin’, e.mail irriquip@aol.com, or 07860 467441, or can be seen in the bar. Anyway, to all of you -

HAVE A GREAT CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR.