

Aims and Objectives

To encourage the preservation, restoration and use of working and ex-working narrow boats.

To promote the maintenance of the waterways system to a standard suitable to facilitate the navigation of such boats throughout the year.

To represent the interests of the users of such boats in their dealings with all waterway authorities.

To establish and maintain a narrow boat archive.

Categories of membership

Full membership is open to the owners of working and ex-working narrow boats built prior to 1965 - including cargo carrying craft, tugs, icebreakers and inspection boats. Shortened and/or converted boats are eligible provided at least half the original length is preserved.

Working boatmen or boatwomen who are regularly engaged in the commercial carriage of cargo by narrow boats are also eligible for full membership.

Other persons, or organisations, interested in the aims and objectives of the club may become Associate Members and are welcomed as Friends of the NBOC.

The only difference between the categories is the ability to vote at general meetings but Friends are of course welcome to air their views.

The Nature of the Club

The historic Narrow Boat Owners Club (NBOC) was formed following the 1966 Inland Waterways Association (IWA) National Rally of Boats at Marple and is therefore one of the oldest inland waterway boat clubs. With the increase of modern built boats since the 1960's the club found it necessary in 1989 to add the descriptive word "historic" to its official name to avoid confusion.

The club has the distinction of being the only club dedicated to preserving the working heritage of our canals in its natural state, ie from the boats themselves to details of the waterways on which they travel. The hNBOC is a national boat club and this may also make it unique on the inland waterways. It additionally means it has no headquarters, other than the addresses of its officers, but this in turn gives it greater flexibility to adapt to changes in need.

The shape of the club's logo is an adaptation of "the little drop of water on which we all depend" as water depth, and hence navigability, has always been seen as a fundamental issue throughout the club's existence.

It is in this latter respect that the club can be of the greatest service to the leisure user. Due to their original need to carry the greatest tonnage possible at any one time, traditional narrow boats are the largest craft which can pass along any narrow canal and hence are often the first to pinpoint problems relating to draft or beam etc. These problems can

then be brought to the attention of the relevant authorities in the hope that maintenance can be carried out before the situation worsens - to the detriment of all, whether boater, angler or other user. The Club's nature has therefore evolved into that of an active pressure group for navigational and heritage interests.

The club has always organised its own rallies, at least one of which has been predominantly a social event and another has campaigning overtones. The club rallies are generally free to enter (although rally plaques are charged at cost if required) and boaters and non-boaters of all descriptions are welcomed. Increasingly however, the club has tended to hold its rallies in conjunction with other organisations as this has achieved better publicity for all concerned. The club benefits from greater attendances and a greater potential for interest and membership. The other organisations benefit from a group of historically interesting craft which can enhance their event.

The hNBOC currently publishes seasonal newsletters to keep its members informed of its activities as well as of other important waterway matters and includes items of particular benefit to those interested in historic craft.

The Benefits of Membership

Firstly, although our aims could be seen to run in tandem with those of other organisations (particularly the Inland Waterways Association), the NBOC has a specific role in catering for the needs of the larger boats and the heritage and lore associated with them. The NBOC might press for a particular length of canal to be dredged (for example) or for the retention of a particular item of canalside furniture, the IWA has more general concerns.

Secondly as owners and users of some of the largest boats possible on the narrow canals, boating practices and problems tend to be different from those of other users. It is important that these differences are explained. Our members are generally friendly and helpful to others and indeed owners of traditional craft have usually owned a variety of smaller craft previously and are therefore aware of the differing problems that each vessel may experience. Obviously in supporting the club's aims, the owner of smaller craft can help in pressuring authorities to perform dredging etc. which will make it easier to avoid conflicts.

Thirdly, if the NBOC were to consistently fail to ensure FULL maintenance of the waterways, siltation, weed growth and other factors would cause problems for all waterway users - where a working boat can go, any smaller boat can go and an angler may fish. The number of working and ex-working boats is strictly limited so, to avoid ultimate extinction, the club needs members of ALL types and welcomes the increasing propor-

tion of other boaters as well as all others with an interest in the historic craft of our narrow canals. It is the combination of historic craft and a usable canal system that is the greatest interest to most of our members.

Finally, as a member, you will receive:-

- a) A regular newsletter - published seasonally.
- b) Occasional discount offers on boating equipment.
- c) Access to the ever increasing wealth of information in the narrow boat register and archive.
- d) Help and advice on craft maintenance etc..
- e) Small, sociable rallies.
- f) BETTER WATERWAYS FOR ALL.