



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

by Phil Prettyman



It's been a busy few months! The BWA Heritage Group was asked by BW to help them find a suitable process for the disposal of some of their historic fleet. Some of these boats had already been leased to established groups and charities but others had not been placed, and BW was seeking to sell them provided that appropriate preservation and financial criteria could be met. Club members in the Heritage Group were able to offer that advice and I am confident that these boats will have a secure future. This proves that when BW works with voluntary groups, a successful outcome can be achieved.

Those of you who were at the November meeting will know that the Marsworth Yard development plans caused a great deal of anger. Following this, the Club lodged an objection to the plans with Aylesbury Vale District Council and had a fairly straight-talking meeting with BW South East. What has become clear is that key managers in BW's national organisation did not have full details of the nature of this development, and this has led to some private embarrassment. The good news is that these plans have now been withdrawn and we have been promised a proper consultation process.

One of the most disturbing aspects of the Marsworth affair was the initial response from several leading members of other boating organisations. At first, the Club was aggressively criticised for our objection. We appeared to be perceived as obstructive, reactionary anoraks. Even though these comments were subsequently muted, it nevertheless suggests a level of antagonism with owners of historic boats amongst the wider waterways community. There are anecdotes about the arrogance of "big boats" that are bandied about behind our backs. In part, this stems from a lack of experience amongst some modern boaters, and a lack of understanding of traditional boating practices and the reasons for them – a classic example is how to pass another boat without diving for the bank! That being said, it is becoming very important that we don't feed this prejudice by inconsiderate boating and that we do our best to explain why we do the things that we do. Helping and talking to people at locks is often a good opportunity to do this. The recent (Feb 2010) Waterways World article by Club member Colin Edmondson is another excellent example.

Finally, I should like to extend our congratulations to Club member, Mary Gibby OBE, and to our Secretary, Alison Smedley MBE, for the recognition of their work in the New Year's Honours List.

I look forward to meeting members at the AGM on 6th March 2010 at Braunston and if you're coming to the Club Gathering of Boats at Coventry at Easter, I look forward to seeing you there too. If you're going to Ellesmere Port at Easter, have a good time!

Phil

I am delighted to pass on the excellent news that two of our members have been honoured in the New Year's list:

Mary Gibby, OBE, for services to Botany

Alison Smedley, MBE, for services to the Inland Waterways

Many congratulations to both of them!

Phil Prettyman - Chairman