



The Horseboating Society

Equus Tecum

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2006

SUNDAY, 26 MARCH 2006, 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM

at the Black Country Living Museum, Castle Hill, Dudley, DY1 4SQ

1. Apologies for absence & record of attendance

Apologies for absence were received from Harry Arnold; Eddie Frangleton; Jenny & Nicholas Hammond; Tony Lewery; Tim & Patsy Lucey; Mary Parry; Jenny Roberts; Linda Ulyet; Dave Walker; Nick Wolfe.

16 Members were in attendance.

2. Minutes of 2005 AGM

Sue Day reminded the meeting that the draft minutes of the 2005 AGM had been available on the web site since March 2005. Kate Nicholls moved that the minutes be adopted as a true record, Mike Turpin seconded. Carried *nem con*.

3. Matters arising

Sue Day made the following points:

- Despite the best efforts of Society members *Elland* had been sold to other buyers. The good news was that they plan to operate her as a butty rather than motorise her.
- Due to the loss of *Elland*, and *Saturn's* priorities being more on restoration rather than operation in 2005 (as reported to the 2005 AGM), two rather than three or four horseboats had been horsedrawn to the 2005 IWA National Festival at Preston Brook.
- As most committee meetings had been arranged at short notice, their dates had not been posted on the web site. Two society members had attended the meeting at Nantwich in June. Society members are always welcome at committee meetings.

4. Reports from the Committee

4.1 Chairperson -

As usual I will look at the society's aims & objectives, to tell you about the work done in 2005.

The aim of the Horseboating Society (HBS) is to preserve and promote horseboating.

We have done this by fulfilling many of our objectives. In general terms we had an extremely successful year in 2005, with of course a few disappointments also.

1 **Communication and co-operation between persons and organisations with an interest in horseboating**

This was my first year with e-mail and it made a phenomenal difference for me, being able to communicate easily with many people. I was able to keep the committee better informed of issues, but the reality was that Ray as secretary and local to me, was the person who has worked closely with me all year.

As regards horseboating, our educational work with the Boat Museum Society (BMS) has continued with its boat *Gifford*. We were busier in 2005, attending both the Middlewich and Nantwich events, then with a second journey to the IWA National Waterways Festival at Preston Brook. I have no hesitation in recommending to the Society that we continue to work with BMS on future projects, and expand on this co-operation with other organisations. For this reason I have spoken and written to the Chief Executive of The Waterways Trust, with the hope of horseboating *Ilkeston* (kept at Ellesmere Port) but also in future other horseboats such as *Northwich* (kept at Gloucester). This summer we shall be partners for the first time with the Shropshire Union Flyboat Restoration Society (SUFRS), celebrating the centenary year of *Saturn*. Each horseboat needs its dedicated team of people to maintain it. *Maria* has the Ashton Packet Boat Company (APBCo), *Gifford* the BMS, *Saturn* the SUFRS. This frees the Horseboating Society to concentrate efforts on providing the horses, harness, horsebox, crew and administration as and where needed. Each boat usually comes with some of its own supporters as crew.

The Horseboating Society committee decided to make an official complaint to British Waterways about the loss of the horsedrawn passenger boat on the Rochdale Canal. This has taken up a considerable amount of my time with letters and meetings and is still ongoing. The purpose is to try to make BW far more aware of the endangered nature of these trip boats, which they agree are an asset to visitors, providing a unique experience. We need BW to assist horseboats with resolving problems in their plying limits.

Our newsletter was discontinued in 2003 but our web site was recognised by *Waterways World* in July 2005 as Web Site of the Month. Well done to our webmaster, Martin Clark.

2 Responsible operation of horsedrawn craft on inland waterways

Maria, built in 1854, was still celebrating 12 months of her 150th anniversary in 2005. This provided the incentive for some loaded boating. Fortunately, Bugsworth Basin, the terminus of the upper Peak Forest Canal, reopened at Easter 2005. We horseboated there, then the APBCo loaded her with 16 tons of limestone to recreate her role of the past. We travelled 7 miles and descended the 16 locks of the Marple flight. All went well except for struggling with the uncut trees – which have now gone due to some pointed hints to BW. Later we reduced the load to 10 tons and travelled about 80 miles to the IWA National at Preston Brook, negotiating 65 locks and legging 4 tunnels en route.

Both *Maria* and *Gifford* attended the IWA National at Preston Brook on the Bridgewater Canal, equalling our previous record in 2002 of 2 horseboats at an IWA National.

The year's efforts reaped 2 awards. The IWA awarded us the Aickman trophy for the "most enterprising and meritorious journey to the IWA National Festival" with *Maria*. The Historic Narrow Boat Owners Club awarded the Keay trophy to *Maria* for her restoration by the APBCo to her former status as a carrying boat, and the fact that we had carried 16 and 10 ton loads whilst horsedrawn contributed to this. This trophy is on view today but will now go to the APBCo who restored *Maria* in 1977 – 78 and again in 2004 – 05.

In September we legged and horseboated *Sunny Valley* to celebrate the bicentenary of Blisworth tunnel. Thanks to Andrew Burge (Alvecote Marina) for the use of *Sunny Valley*. HBS thanks Robin Evans, Chief Executive, BW, for the permission to leg the tunnel.

3 Training of crew and horses to acquire the skills necessary for horseboating

The horseboating with *Maria* and *Gifford* during 2005 introduced some people to their first opportunity as crew, whilst others built on previous experience. Specific skills were - using a towline extension, the block line and pulley, with the loaded *Maria* in Bosley locks, and legging using wings in Blisworth Tunnel was a new experience for all 8 leggers.

4 Maintenance and restoration of the waterway environment to a standard suitable for use by horsedrawn craft

The number of meetings I attend has increased. Besides local BW user group meetings, there are 2 boating issues meetings and 2 waterway corridor issues meetings at BW Hatton, and also the BW Annual Meeting and now 2 BW Advisory Forum (BWAFF) Meetings, all in London. We are very well represented to BW at national level, and I raise my voice regularly – no point in going otherwise! We have been involved in 2005 in consultations about towpath mowing and vegetation cutting, then on motorbike barriers.

Our horseboating heritage document was a major project for us in 2004-5, and we must thank Ray Butler for much hard work in this area. My invitation to Robin Evans, the Chief Executive of BW, to attend the IWA National and receive the document was accepted enthusiastically. He read the document and congratulated us on it within a week. It has been distributed now at both BW boating issues and corridor issues meetings for all the national user groups to read and comment on before we make a final version. The greatest accolade must be that BW wishes to include their logo on it, and accept it within their range of internal guidance documents.

5 Preservation, restoration and maintenance of the various types of horsedrawn craft

At our 2005 AGM I reported on the launch of *Saturn* the day before. Throughout 2005 the SUFRS undertook much work themselves after the professional completion by Malcolm Webster at Malkins Bank. She went under motor tow to the IWA National for all to admire. Later she was bowhauled over the Pontycysyllte aqueduct to celebrate its bicentenary. We must all congratulate the SUFRS on the success of the restoration of *Saturn*. Now we can look forward to her going horseboating!

Two HBS members, Rick Muir and Joanna Peck, have now got their iron horseboat *Bride* on the dock at Warwickshire Fly Boat Co. Eventually this is to be a horsedrawn passenger trip boat. We must wish them good luck with this restoration.

As already reported, *Maria* was awarded the Keay award by hNBOC for her restoration by APBCo to her role as a carrying boat once more. Congratulations to the APBCo.

6 Education

“10 green bottles standing on the wall – and if one green bottle should accidentally fall, there’ll be 9 green bottles standing on the wall ...”

There are now only 5 horsedrawn passenger boats left in UK, but a 6th will be launched in the late summer of 2006. These boats introduce thousands of visitors to the experience of riding in a horsedrawn boat. Details are on our website, www.horseboating.org.uk

The grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to HBS is for us to continue our educational work at all levels. On our journeys we cause much interest. We attend events to give harness displays. Simple accounts are written about these journeys for future reference. We educate all ages.

At the IWA National 2005 we ran our first Wild Over Waterways (WoW) activity stand, and thanks go to Vicky Hose for producing our activity booklet. Our waterway craft workers also demonstrated their skills such as harness repairs, and painting.

At Quarry Bank Mill, Styal, Cheshire is England’s last working cotton mill. The International Guild of Knot Tyers demonstrated to the public how to make cable-laid cotton towlines, which they kindly donated to HBS. Bonny and Queenie attended.

7 Research

The *Maria 150* PowerPoint presentation put together by Ray and me during our research to celebrate the 150th anniversary of *Maria* was very well received at many talks in 2005. Meanwhile, Cath Turpin was busy following up the history of *Gifford* and other Clayton tar boats. Tony Lewery remained as prolific as ever, concentrating efforts on *Saturn* reports.

8 Retention of horseboating records in archives

HBS has no formal archives or storage place. Much valuable material is in the private collections of members which can sometimes be borrowed. The waterway museums have written material and artefacts. The HLF require the Society to keep documentation about funded activities and this will be produced and shown on our web site.

Chairperson's Summary - The year 2005 was very busy and successful for the HBS. We received recognition from IWA and hNBOC, and support from the Chief Executive of BW. The projects for this year, 2006, rely again entirely on you, the members, for their success.

Questions from the floor:

(i) Does the Society have charitable status? This would be advantageous, for example by giving access to gift aid. Answer – not at present but it is not ruled out for the future.

(ii) Has the Society got public liability insurance? Answer – not at present, although now covered for horse and towline with Carriagehouse Insurance, and HBS company limited liability protects members involved in some incidents. The meeting remitted the issue to the committee for investigation. BMS offered to give HBS advice on the topic.

4.2 Secretary

Ray Butler reported that three issues occupied most of his time as secretary during 2005.

The Heritage Lottery Fund Application took up a large amount of effort. It was initially prepared with help from Ken Catford, BMS. Sue Day put much effort in and obtained advice from T3SC, the Tameside 3rd Sector Coalition, a volunteer support agency. The drafting of the application with amendments and alterations took days of effort.

The application was rejected on its first submission because the Society's constitution allowed the disposal of assets on dissolution of the Society at the membership's absolute discretion, with no constraints on what we did with the money. We could legally have spent the unspent balance of any lottery grant on a big party.

We took the opportunity to include a clause in the memorandum and articles of association of the limited company to constrain disposal of assets on dissolution of the society to other organisations with similar aims. We resubmitted the application in the name of the limited company, and we were then awarded the grant for a 3 year programme, August 2005-8.

Setting up the limited company was made possible with the help of HBS member Steve Corbett, and we must thank him formally for dealing with the Companies House bureaucracy and advising on the form-filling. HBS became a company limited by guarantee in April 2005.

The Horseboating Heritage Guidance is proving to be a really valuable exercise. Thanks go to all the photographers and artists who generously allowed us to use their work to illustrate the guide, and all the stakeholders who helped us develop it in the first place, and whose feedback helped us to improve the first draft to produce the next version.

Some copies of the first draft are available today for inspection by members.

Early in 2006, Ray was given a major new responsibility of a project to manage by his employers. To his immense regret he needs to resign as Secretary and Director, as he now simply does not have the time and energy to serve HBS as he would wish. He took comfort in resigning in the knowledge that he had helped with major advances in the Society's cause.

4.3 Treasurer and Membership Officer

These reports were read by Ray Butler on behalf of Tim Lucey.

Treasurer's Report

A financial statement (not the annual accounts) was circulated.

The financial position of the Society has remained static over the year thanks to the large injection of HLF grant money. Had this not been available, we would have had to seriously curtail activities last year in 2005.

Just to run quickly through the accounts: -

You may wonder why members' subscriptions and donations have odd pence in them. We had one member join from the US. He sent 20 dollars, which exchanged to £10.14p. Also an expenses cheque of £14.98 was not cashed, and this has been shown as a donation to balance the accounts.

Donations were dramatically up this year and I'm sure the Society would like to thank the following for their generosity: - Mike Turpin, Derek Armstrong, Ed Mortimer, Ron Marsland, D Gostage, John Lockley, and Ann Tomlin.

Membership subs are much the same. These never quite balance out as subs can be paid in the wrong year and members joining in the autumn have their subs carried forward.

Expenses are fairly self-explanatory. Affiliation fees were down because a direct debit was cancelled when we changed bank accounts upon receipt of the HLF grant. IWA was the temporary loser but we are now corporate members of IWA again.

The main extra expenses were insurance and the 2005 AGM. Both costs were unavoidable. Thanks to the lower fees of the Black Country Living Museum and your generosity in paying your entry fee into the museum, this 2006 AGM should be cheaper than last year.

The HLF grant money covered expenses in printing and distributing the draft Horseboating Heritage Guidance and the Society's boating activities during August and September 2005.

The bulk of the grant money is now held in a separate deposit account to earn interest. This is not shown in the statement as it took longer than thought to set up but is now complete.

Finally I would just like to say these are exciting times for the society. We have great financial backing to carry out all sorts of activities but this is not the time to sit back and think HBS doesn't need members' help. This is the time to build up the society's bank account so we have a nest egg to fall back on when the grant money has all gone. We need your membership, new membership, and your support and help.

Questions from the floor

(i) Does the Heritage Lottery Fund grant require match finance from the Society or simply volunteer effort? Answer – volunteer effort only. At HLF rates, the expected volunteer effort is about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the funding.

(ii) Will the Society pay a £10 one-off fee to reorganise the HBS website's physical organisation? Martin Clark asked. Answer - the HBS Officers immediately agreed it.

Ray Butler proposed that the meeting accepted the Treasurer's Report and noted the interim financial statement, Sue Day seconded. Carried *nem con*.

Membership Report

Numbers were almost 100, (North 61, Central 16, South 17, and USA 1)

Sue Day pointed out that while membership had always been strongest in the North, in earlier years it had been 50% North, 50% South and Central combined.

This year it was $\frac{2}{3}$ North, $\frac{1}{3}$ South and Central combined. There had been few events in the South in particular, but it was up to members in the area to find opportunities for events and increase membership numbers.

She hoped that the planned journeys in 2006 to the BCN and on the Oxford Canal and the Thames would give a spur to membership in the Central and Southern areas.

(i) Stephen Rees - Jones suggested a leaflet that could be distributed by trip boat operators. Could the Society produce a collaborative marketing leaflet similar to "The Great Little Trains of Wales"? Sue responded that the operators had not wanted this when offered, but that the committee would consider how best to do this, perhaps by producing a cheap flyer to be followed up with a more interesting / better quality leaflet if interest was shown. The Grand Western Horseboat Company has suggested that a pack of all the operators' leaflets could be put together for the 2006 IWA National Festival at Beale Park, on the River Thames.

(ii) Mike Turpin suggested approaching Richard Lacey of the Working Boats Project, who he understood had some members keen to be involved in horseboating. BMS would do this.

4.4 Other Committee Members

Derek Armstrong reported that he had been able to participate in the Society's activities at Preston Brook and Blisworth Tunnel.

The video of *Pamela* from 1976 has been transferred to DVD and a commentary added, based on Derek's recollections and records and those of passengers.

Derek has around 2,000 colour slides from *Pamela's* journeys in the 1970s which he has sorted and from which he plans to develop a slide show for members later this year.

He has also obtained a 16mm sound cine projector, and he is now able to show archive films such as *Painted Boats* and *The Bargee* all available from the British Film Institute. Derek is discussing access to the BFI's collection of archive film.

He also has video of various Society activities this year including Sue's talk at the 2005 IWA Festival.

Lynnette Crossley reported that pressure of study and professional examinations had prevented her from being as active as she would have wished, but that she was now a fully qualified Environmental Health Officer & Health and Safety Inspector. She now has more time to devote to Society activities. She has also become involved in the Calder Navigation Society, with whom she intends to explore collaboration with HBS.

5. Events 2006

Sue reminded members that *Towlines* is distributed only once per year, but is kept up-to-date on the web site. It is especially important to check details before travelling any distance.

None of the events can go ahead without committed crew and Sue urged everyone to return 2006 crew forms. More blanks can be downloaded from the web site.

Subject to The Waterways Trust agreeing to the use of *Ilkeston* the next event would be experimenting with the overhead towline at Ellesmere Port at Easter.

Mike Turpin said that the Sight Seen Partnership had been interested in filming the use of the overhead line, both for horsedrawn and motor & butty pair boating, for some time. The meeting agreed that, should the experiments succeed, and members become competent in the use of the technique, collaboration (perhaps in 2007) is very desirable with horse and driver provided by the HBS.

6. Election of Officers and Committee Members

Tim Lucey and Lynnette Crossley retired by rotation. They offered themselves for re-election.

Mike Turpin proposed that they be re-elected; Ray Butler seconded; carried unanimously.

Richard Muir volunteered to serve on the committee as Southern rep. He was elected by acclamation.

7. Date for AGM 2007

After discussion, a consensus emerged that the membership preferred the AGM to be in March, on a Sunday, but avoiding Mothering Sunday and the day the clocks change.

8. Possible venues for AGM 2007

Suggestions were made for the Boat Museum, Ellesmere Port, and the museum at Shardlow. After discussion and a show of hands no clear preference emerged and the meeting agreed to leave the choice to the Committee.

9. Items for Discussion

No items had been received before the AGM.

10. Horsedrawn passenger boats report

Sue Day reported that after Calder Valley Cruising (CVC) ceased to operate on the Rochdale Canal from November 2004 there were only 5 horsedrawn passenger boats in 2005.

3 are on the waters of British Waterways

- Foxton
- Kennet Horseboat Co at Kintbury, near Newbury.
- Llangollen

The Godalming Packetboat Company is on National Trust property.

The Grand Western Horseboat Co is on Devon County Council property.

The Horseboating Society committee had decided to make an official complaint to BW about the loss of CVC as the proprietors and Sue Day, the boathorse contractor, felt that CVC had not been given any assistance by BW when they experienced difficulties on their plying limits from 2002, when the Rochdale Canal reopened to full navigation and new boat arrivals were allowed to moor to the towpath. Sue Day is conducting the complaint on behalf of HBS.

Reports about Horseboats

Foxton has scarcely operated since 2000, when the operators' energies were directed to trying to sort out their lease with BW. They usually do short trips.

Kennet Horseboat Co The new proprietors (son and daughter-in-law of previous operators) are in their second season. They are experiencing similar problems to CVC with many boats of casual visitors moored to the towing path in summer months, as they are on the open national network, but to a lesser extent than CVC suffered. A tall pump out station built at the water's edge, close to Kintbury lock, also makes towing line operations difficult.

Llangollen The proprietor reported they were "keeping their heads down" in 2005, busy as ever. The business was sold to new operators in March 2006.

Godalming Packetboat Co had a busy year as usual in 2005.

Grand Western Horseboat Co is now run by the son and daughter-in-law of the previous owners, in their first season in 2005. They feel they are much appreciated by Devon County Council. No significant problems, but less work than in the 1980s.

Bywater Cruises A 6th operation is due to begin in July 2006. Stephen Rees-Jones, a former operator of the horsedrawn trip boat *Iona* on the Shropshire Union Canal in the 1960s, will be operating on the Montgomery Canal on a section not linked to the main system. This boat will carry passengers for two full days' cruising, with overnight accommodation ashore.

10. Raffle and auction

The raffle raised £24, and a painted cabin stool very kindly donated by Tim Lucey was auctioned and raised £30. Together these raised enough money to fund the room hire.

11. Any other business

Kate Nicholls suggested that the Society's web site should be linked to that of the International Guild of Knot Tyers and vice-versa. Agreed.

Ray Butler suggested that the Society should send formal congratulations to the Shropshire Union Flyboat Restoration Society on the 100th anniversary of *Saturn*.

Cath Turpin pointed out that 2006 also marked *Gifford's* 80th anniversary.

The meeting resolved to send suitable greetings to the owners of both boats.

Stephen Rees-Jones outlined his plans for horsedrawn boat holidays and trips on the Newtown section of the Montgomery Canal from July 2006. He mentioned that he could offer a discount scheme for Horseboating Society members, and he handed out his company's brochures. The meeting wished his enterprise every success.

John Cooke outlined the circumstances around the demolition on alleged safety grounds of the Long Horse Bridge at Derwent Mouth – the junction of the Trent & Mersey Canal with the Trent navigation. This is due to be replaced by a modern structure that is not designed to be used for haulage from the towing path. The planning authority declined to consider navigation and heritage issues when objections were lodged to planning permission for the replacement bridge. A letter is expected to be published in the May 2006 *Waterways World*.

The meeting agreed to support the principle of restoring the bridge to as near its original position and design as possible and encouraged members to write in support of this. Sue Day emphasised that letters should be written from individuals not as representatives of the Society. The Committee would respond on behalf of HBS. John Cooke collected email addresses of members in attendance who wished him to send them a detailed briefing.

Sue Day thanked everyone for attending and participating. The meeting closed at 4:50.