

Editorial

Much hot air and anger have been expended on the CRT's new logo, for which they paid £60,000. The blue and white design, which resembles the end of a half sunk pipe, replaces the black and white swan design which, five years earlier, replaced the somewhat similar design of a humpbacked bridge and reedmace. I must confess I find the oldest design of the three the most meaningful.

What's in a name (or logo)?

Wellbeing is the new selling point for the canals, intended to draw more people to them although I am not sure how this links up with the pipe design, if that is what it is. Boaters, whose licence fees provide some 25% of the CRT income, account for perhaps only 3 - 5% of canal users but are an essential part of the canal scene. It would be a very different place without them. They are the icing on the cake.

The intention is to draw in other categories, such as walkers, cyclists, picnickers and those just there for the ambience and their wellbeing. The problem is that they don't pay the bills. Attempts to license cyclists on towpaths was a dismal failure and getting money out of those on foot is a non starter. The Scottish canal system is currently in disarray with blockages, there being many fewer boaters to foot the repair bills.

A particular wish is to attract ethnic minorities. Is even the present usage known? Taking photographs at dawn at Dundas Wharf, where the Somerset Coal Canal joins the Kennet & Avon, I was surprised at the number of Asians I encountered training on the towpath, a category I am not used to meeting there at other times of the day.

If minorities are not attracted to canals, should we worry? Does it matter if we are not drawn in droves to each other's interests? One of my first articles in *Canoeist* (Jun 83, p26) was an attempt to discover why there were (and still are) so few black paddlers in canoeing. It is a way of life for many in Africa, also for many Asians. There were some who had reached high standards in competition but mostly these seemed to come from unusual backgrounds, such as being brought up in white families.

On the other hand, the recent influx of east European immigrants have taken well to canoeing. Look at a marathon or sprint start list, even more at a results sheet, and you will see no holding back and you will note such people made welcome.

How does attracting more people to the towpaths assist the finances? It is tempting to suggest that the only way to get them to pay their share is by drawing an appropriate size of grant from general taxation, the previous system.

The management of CRT these days consist of outsiders, those without a canal or boating background, like the situation within canoeing (Ivan Lawler, a notable exception). These people are promoting wellbeing as the heading on their website, not boating. It is a claim which could be made equally by ballet, table tennis or hot air ballooning enthusiasts.

Will the new logo get the message across? Staff in the CRT cannot even agree on whether the rivers in the Canal & River Trust name are all the rivers or just the navigations covered by their licence fees. Perhaps they should have changed their name again, not their logo.

As a footnote, the new logo of the Inland Waterways Association has caused less furore. The raised sword of a body fighting for the rights of water users has been replaced by a coloured propeller with blades textured with water, brickwork and leaf. It looks a bit as though it has been cobbled together from clipart but at least you can tell what it intends.

Stuart Fisher

Journalism is printing what someone else does not want printed: everything else is public relations - George Orwell

Publisher contact

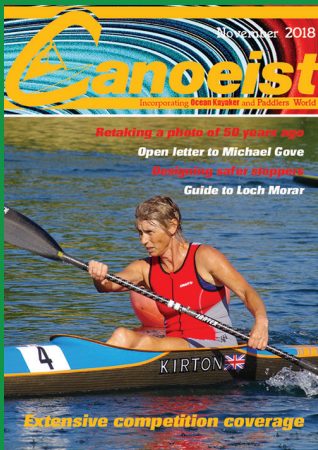
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Ali Pendle competing in the Box End Quadrathlon. This Bedford event drew top name entrants from marathon, sprint, wild water racing and slalom as well as many who would not see themselves primarily as paddlers.



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