

‘John Bunyan’ Cruises Away with Prestigious Award

The *John Bunyan* Boat has been recognised at the Pride in Bedfordshire Awards as the winner in the category ‘Raising the Profile of the Town’.

The ceremony, held at the Corn Exchange in Bedford, heard how the *John Bunyan* Boat had attracted visitors into Bedford and had carried 4,000 passengers on cruises along the Great Ouse since its launch in July 2013. The boat has also carried wedding parties and many chartered functions, and has held a multi-faith blessing service.

Members of the Trust, which owns the boat, were in the audience to receive the award. Chairman Graham Mabbutt said: ‘I am delighted to receive the award for the outstanding success the *John Bunyan* has been as a community boat for Bedford’. He added: ‘This boat was just a dream a year ago and it is down entirely to our sponsors and volunteers that it has been such a great success’.

The community boat was launched by the Trust to help promote its long-term plans to link the Great Ouse at Kempston to the Grand Union Canal at Milton Keynes.



B&MK Trustees Patrick Hall, David Fowler and Graham Mabbutt with award sponsor Nisa Local representatives Alpa Patel and Yvette Gilmartin and host, actor Nitin Ganatra (Masood in *Eastenders*) at the Pride in Bedfordshire Awards. Photo © *Bedford Times & Citizen*.





View from the Chair

We have had yet another busy and exciting period since the last *B&MK News* was published.

The B&MK Bedford Community Boat, *John Bunyan*, carried over 4,000 passengers in its first four months. We have received tremendous support from our team of boat volunteers who have made this all possible and from our sponsors and those many supporters who have helped to promote the boat. To show our appreciation, the Enterprise Board Management Team have organised several social meetings on the boat, the most recent with a hot curry!

Along with other colleagues I was pleased to attend the *Bedford Times & Citizen* Pride of Bedfordshire Awards at the Bedford Corn Exchange. We were delighted and amazed to hear the '*John Bunyan* Boat Team' announced as the winners of the 'Raising the Profile of the Town' category (see front page for the full story). We are now preparing our plans for 2014's Spring and Summer Cruise Programme.

The Trust also hosted two successful events: the Mayor's Fundraising dinner in Milton Keynes, with just over 40 diners raising over £500 for the Trust's funds, and the Annual Partnership Conference, which was held in Flitwick in November (see pages 4 and 5). This was again a very successful event, with good progress presentations from the Consortium Partners and a very good speech from the newly appointed Chief Executive of the Canal & River Trust, Richard Perry.

Looking towards the future, we need additional directors for the B&MK Waterway Trust, and also for the B&MK Waterway Enterprise who run the *John Bunyan* Boat – preferably people with business experience. If you are interested, please do contact me or discuss with any of the other Trust or Enterprise Company Directors.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our members, supporters and volunteers a very happy and successful New Year. I am sure that 2014 will be yet another year of progression both for the B&MK Waterway Project and the *John Bunyan* Boat.

Graham Mabbutt.

*P.S. Follow the B&MK Trust on
Twitter: JohnBunyanBoat*

Look Back with Pride

Our first season with the *John Bunyan* is almost over, and although there have been some teething problems we can be immensely proud of the achievements of everyone concerned with its initial success. We have exceeded our income forecast for both Charter and Public trips, held Christmas parties and several trips for children to meet Santa. We should have the background heating operational soon, too.

So now we are looking forward to the new season and hope to double the number of trips, passengers and revenue in 2014.

We will be installing 230V electric points in the cabin for discos, schools and business meetings, and hope to have a licensed bar operational by Mother's Day on 30 March. We will also have to renew the blacking to protect the steelwork in the Spring and will need the help of several volunteers to paint it on (please contact us at the email address below if you could spare a few hours). Additionally, although everyone is thrilled by our large panoramic windows, they don't open enough for adequate ventilation in the summer, so we hope to modify the opening to double the ventilation, and on



Children enjoying the Santa Trip aboard the *John Bunyan*.

B&MK News

Published by the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust.

Editors....Geoff Wheeler & Helen Price
Proof Readers.....Don & Jill Allison
Photo enhancement....Keith Malone
Distribution.....Leigh Willows
Printed byMurrays

Comments or articles for inclusion in the next edition should be sent to:

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really hot days they can be lifted out.

However, the success of 2014 depends on two main things: the continued enthusiastic support of volunteers and a much more extensive marketing programme to double our success of 2013. We will need to double the number of volunteers to run twice the number of trips, as we have struggled at times in our first year, and we would also like to double the number of boatmasters. We need more helms and deck crew and more people to help in the galley and bar. We also need help with boat maintenance to varying degrees, and help with accounts and administration is becoming increasingly important, including assistance in answering our telephone booking line, as we would like to offer more afternoons and evenings as well as covering duplicates in the mornings.

We have discovered that early extensive marketing is essential to fill the boat, which holds 60+ passengers. As well as repeating our initial successful public trips programme, we are planning many more in 2014. We will offer new cruises, possibly with new start points. There will be many new special cruises, starting the season with a Mother's Day cruise. A 'dawn chorus' cruise in conjunction with the RSPB, following on from the sell-out success of their first dusk cruise in 2013, will start at 6 AM on Saturday 5 April. For those who aren't early birds, there will be an evening cruise on 5 June. There will also be an Easter Bunny trip on Easter Sunday, 20 April, plus special trips on Easter Bank Holiday Monday as well as the May Bank holidays. The *John Bunyan* will play a prominent role in the Bedford River Festival from 18 to 20 July. We are also hoping to run a 'Bat Watching and Listening' trip, a 'History of Bedford' trip and a talk on antiques on the boat.

In anticipation of getting a bar licence we will be planning 'beer and jazz' cruises, fish and chips lunches and suppers, and more extensive meals offered by our catering partners. We hope to run some small (approximately 40 guests) wedding receptions with a sit-down meal followed by a disco. We believe that the bar and a wide range of food options will make the *John Bunyan* much more popular with businesses, too.

The Swan Hotel will be running their upmarket cream teas as an alternative to our popular cream teas one day a month in the summer, and we will offer 'Coffee and Cake' cruises on some mornings. The popular 'Town & Anchor' cruises will run again in 2014 on the last Wednesday of the month, starting in March or April.

All cruises as well as charter trips can be booked through our booking line on 0330 1239 511 or by email via bmkboat@gmail.com.

Roger Crews

Obituaries



Andrew Eardley

Andrew and Jenny Eardley have been Trust members for many years, helping out at the events and contributing to organising walks and parties, as well as much successful fundraising. Many of these events would not have happened without their joint leadership. Homemade cakes were a great addition to meetings held in their house, where everyone was made to feel very welcome.

Andrew was a very talented artist and his love for the waterways was beautifully portrayed in many of his paintings. His artistic and design skills came to the fore in making maps for walks and contributing sketches to bids for funds.

Those of us in the B&MK Bedford East Group will remember Andrew for the many ways that he, with Jenny, contributed to the Trust and especially the fun they brought to their contributions. We will also remember Andrew through a donation in his name to the *John Bunyan* Community Boat. Our last farewell to Andrew was held memorably on the *John Bunyan*.

Marilyn Leask

Robin Smithett

Well-known waterway photographer and founding volunteer photographer for the B&MK, Robin Smithett, died in November 2013. He will be sadly missed across the boating world and particularly by us in the B&MK.

He always helped in the search for photographs whenever he could; he would locate photos in his library or, if none existed, take shots especially for us. He 'held the faith' in the early days when other organisations were doubters, and did sterling work to create the first sets of images that exemplified our vision for the B&MK.

His photography was vital for the newsletter, talks and exhibitions teams, and only recently he was still helping us, finding a photo needed for the Community Boat leaflet.

Robin was chairman of the hotel boats section of the Association of Pleasure Craft Operators (APCO) for many years, acting as a vital intelligence co-ordinator for its members. His photographs were taken all over the system and featured in countless editions of the *Waterways* magazine. His artistic skill lay in putting boats in great landscape settings.

His memory will live on amongst Trust members and in Trust documents.

Jane Wolfson and Rodney Evans



Local Authorities Counting Down to be 'First Diggers' of Waterway



November's Partnership Conference proved to be a great success. The highlights included:

- A vintage year for Milton Keynes Council, with 'healthy progress' being made and 'all the pieces coming together'
- Uncertainty over Covanta project but Parliamentary Select Committee set precedence by insisting that Waterway must be part of any future development
- 'Steady as she goes' in Bedford Borough, with further engineering studies planned
- Central Beds Council 'confident of progress' in Marston Gate area
- *John Bunyan Boat* 'a resounding success'

Overview

There was a definite upbeat feel to this year's Annual Partnership Conference for the 60 guests who attended the Rufus Centre in Flitwick.

All the speakers and guests expressed the view that this had been a good year, with small but significant progress being made, although none of the authorities were yet in a position to say who will 'dig first'.

At the outset, one of the original Trust members, Jim Stafferton, presented the chairman with a cheque for the Trust of £1,000 on behalf of the Lovells Bury Masonic Lodge at Ampthill, of which he is the Chairman.



Graham Mabbutt receiving the cheque from B&MK member Jim Stafferton.

Cllr Caroline Maudlin, Chairperson of Central Beds Council opened the conference and stated her ongoing support for the Waterway and the tourism and development opportunities it will bring to the areas of Marston Vale, Bedford and Milton Keynes.

Bedford Mayor David Hodgson, who is also chairman of the consortium of local authorities and agencies that will deliver the Waterway project, congratulated the Trust on a successful year and reaffirmed that Bedford Borough Council is a continuing major supporter of the B&MK and the *John Bunyan Boat*.

Cllr Brian White, Mayor of Milton Keynes, stated that the Waterway was at the forefront of the economic development of all three councils. Within Milton Keynes it was part of the adopted Core Strategy Plan that would ensure it being included in all plans as development occurred along the route.

Update from Milton Keynes Council

Sarah Evans, Strategic Delivery Manager at Milton Keynes Council stated that it had been a 'vintage year' for MKC with the transfer of planning powers and the responsibility for the local investment plan, together with the creation of the MK Development Partnership. The Council is now responsible for the Corporate Strategy, which includes the Waterway plan. For progress to continue they needed to 'disentangle' some planning permissions from the previous authority and be able to 'match fund' any EU money.

Milton Keynes Cllr John Bint, responding to a question from **B&MK Trust Vice President Jane Wolfson** about which Council would 'dig first' said that the transfer of the planning powers were very significant, together with the transfer of some land ownership to the Council at the Grand Union/Willen Lake end of the route. Although he was unable to commit to a date, he did say 'the pieces are coming together'.

Update from Bedford Borough Council

Paul Vann, BBC Development Manager and Secretary to the Consortium, said there were a number of important and detailed engineering studies in progress and declared that it was 'steady as she goes'. Engineering studies will take place along the route when any development occurs. These are vital to ensure the suitability of the land as route for the Waterway. He quoted further work by Halcrow near the A421 for drainage, levels, locks and costings, and also further studies at the Persimmon Homes site. He was confident that by early next year, he will know most of the planned route through the Bedford Borough area.

Update from Central Beds Council

Laura Kitson admitted that the announcement by Covanta to withdraw from their planned development has created some 'uncertainty'. However, she was delighted that the route of the Waterway has now been secured by the announcement by a Parliamentary Select Committee that any future development on the site must now include the Waterway. She claimed that this was unprecedented and required a considerable input from Central Beds Council to the Select Committee regarding the planning, strategy, support, benefit and involvement of the communities along the route.

Andy Lewis, also from Central Beds Council, stated that after meetings with Network Rail he was 'confident of progress' with tackling the engineering and congestion issues at the Marston Gate and Station Road area in Marston Mortaine. The Council was also waiting final proposals from Barratt Homes for their planned development of 400 homes and the possible siting of a cemetery in that area (although there is no requirement for Barratt Homes to accommodate the Waterway as their permission was granted in 2006).

Update from Sustrans Route 51

Andy Knight explained that Sustrans do not link towns together but linked Town to Countryside. He whole heartedly supported the Waterway and believed that there were some funding opportunities to build a cycle/walkway along part of the proposed route.

Keynote Speaker Richard Parry, Chief Executive Officer, Canal & River Trust

The nation had been left an incredible waterway legacy. The role of the Canal and River Trust is to enhance the waterway network of 2,000 miles, 1,500 locks, 3,000 bridges and 1,000 Wildlife Conservation Sites, 72 reservoirs and 35,000 licensed boats. In addition, there are 10 million visitors and 20,000 people employed, with a net benefit to the economy of £500 million.

Government funding has been cut by a third to £40 million, whilst the Trust were looking to increase commercial income and fundraising. There are major works planned, such as the £12 million on towpath improvements. The key objective is partnerships, working with local communities and volunteers; for example, the recruitment of 370 voluntary lockkeepers and the local adoption by volunteers to improve and maintain their canals. He was delighted to be working in partnership with the B&MK, where the Canal & River Trust are leading on the SEMLEP bid and engineering support, as well as supplying office space for Laura Jones, the B&MK Project Officer. He finished by saying that this was a unique opportunity to create a positive future for canals and rivers and people who value them.



All the local Mayors were in attendance: (L-R) Cllr Brian White, Milton Keynes; Cllr Caroline Maudlin, Chairperson, Central Beds Council; Cllr Phillip Thompson, Flitwick Town Council; Dave Hodgson, Bedford Borough Council.



(L-R) Laura Kitson, Central Beds Council; Paul Vann, Bedford Borough Council; Andy Knight, Sustrans Route 51; Sarah Evans, Milton Keynes Council; Andy Lewis, Central Beds Council; Graham Mabbutt, Chair, B&MK Waterway Trust.



A Volunteer's Experience

It is 0700 hrs on a Thursday and in two hours I shall be at Priory Marina preparing the boat for the public cruises today, joining a full crew of five volunteers. I draw back my curtains and find that instead of the sunshine for which I had been hoping, it is overcast and threatening rain. However, on the bright side, it isn't either too hot or cold either.

I have a cup of tea – can't think of starting my day without – and then prepare my wet-weather gear for the day ahead. Shortly after 0815 hrs, I make my way to the bus stop where I take the X5 to the top of Barker's Lane. One of the volunteers has arranged to meet me off the bus to save the walk to the Marina. As we pass the clock and temperature gauge it is showing 0910 hrs and 18 degrees. So far the rain hasn't arrived.

Like a well-oiled machine, the boat is prepared for the day and we leave the Marina shortly after 0935 hrs. The crew briefing allocated our roles for the day and with a full quota of 65 passengers booked, I offered to help in the cabin.

We arrive at Sovereigns Quay and welcome aboard our passengers, all of whom are excited at the prospect of their first trip to Kempston on the *John Bunyan*. As it is so busy today I decide a waitress (no sexism intended) service would be the most efficient way of providing snacks and drinks for the passengers. My colleague and I worked very hard for the next hour or so, selling almost £100 of food and drinks.

By now we had turned the boat at Kempston, the helmsman being rewarded with a round of applause following his slick turn. I spend the remainder of the trip chatting to the customers and answering their questions both about the boat and the new canal project. The time flies by and in what seems no time at all we are approaching Sovereigns Quay at the end of our journey.



The *John Bunyan*.



Chris Tilney aboard the *John Bunyan*.

Each of our passengers is offered a free Bedford BID goody bag and invited to make a donation to the trust. By 1300 hrs we had taken the grand total of £240 (not including the ticket price) and disembarked a full quota of satisfied passengers.

The shorter afternoon trip had fewer passengers so I was able to take the helm and have my first attempt at putting the boat into Town Lock from the upper river.

I have to confess I was quite proud of my effort, which went very smoothly because I had brilliant support from my fellow crew members.

Another successful trip over, we made our way back to Priory, making the boat ready en route for the next trip.

By 1730 hrs I was back at home reflecting on the satisfaction I felt from time well spent. The hard work and fairly long day were more than rewarded by the fact that I had helped over 80 people experience something new to them.

I have enjoyed every minute of the time I have spent as a volunteer on the *John Bunyan* over the summer. Fellow volunteers are professional and helpful and a really cheerful bunch. Some of our passengers have never been on a boat and have many interesting questions, which I try to answer. I have had to learn many things very quickly but I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

Chris Tilney

The Trust would like to thank Chris for the fridge donated to the *John Bunyan* in memory of her father, Eric Copley, who died in January. Eric gave Chris her love of the water.

Events Calendar 2014



Thursday 23 January	Projects Group Box End Park, 7pm
Thursday 20 March	Projects Group Box End Park, 7pm
Thursday 15 May	Information Evening incorporating B&MK AGM United Reformed Church, Newport Pagnell MK16 8AB, 7.30pm
Thursday 22 May	Projects Group Box End Park, 7pm
Saturday 24 – Monday 26 May	Crick Boat Show Come and help on the B&MK stand or drop by and say hello.
Thursday 24 July	Projects Group Box End Park, 7pm

Talks Report

Our excellent talks team continues to keep many groups and associations informed of the news and events of the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust.

A further three talks were given prior to the end of 2013 – at MK WEA, Wootton Library and Salisbury IWA – and nine talks are already booked for 2014.

If you would be interested in joining the team as a speaker, or would like to book a talk for your group in 2014, please contact us:

John and Sally Gunning
Email: talks@b-mkwaterway.co.uk
Tel: 01234 305925

and follow the link to your favourite shopping site. You must click the link each time you shop for it to work and so that the Trust gets a share.

If you know someone who already uses the site, get them to send you a link through Facebook, Twitter, Google+ or LinkedIn.

For further information and to sign up, visit <http://www.giveasyoulive.com>

Car Raffle Raises Funds

In just one session at the centre:mk in November 2013, £117 worth of charity raffle tickets to win a car were sold by B&MK Trust for the MK Community Foundation.

B&MK Trust participate every year in order to raise funds and generate publicity for the Trust and its projects.

Give as you Live

If you regularly shop online, you can help the B&MK Trust easily and at no cost to yourself. *Give as You Live* is a website which collects a small percentage of what you spend and passes it to charities.

If you pick Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust as your charity, we can collect when you spend at thousands of online stores, including Amazon, John Lewis, Marks & Spencer and many others. Some sites donate a single amount when you sign up. You pay the same price either way, so this is income for the Trust with no cost to you.

You can download an add-in for common browsers, or start at the *Give as You Live* site



The grand prize in the MK Community Foundation Charity Car Raffle.



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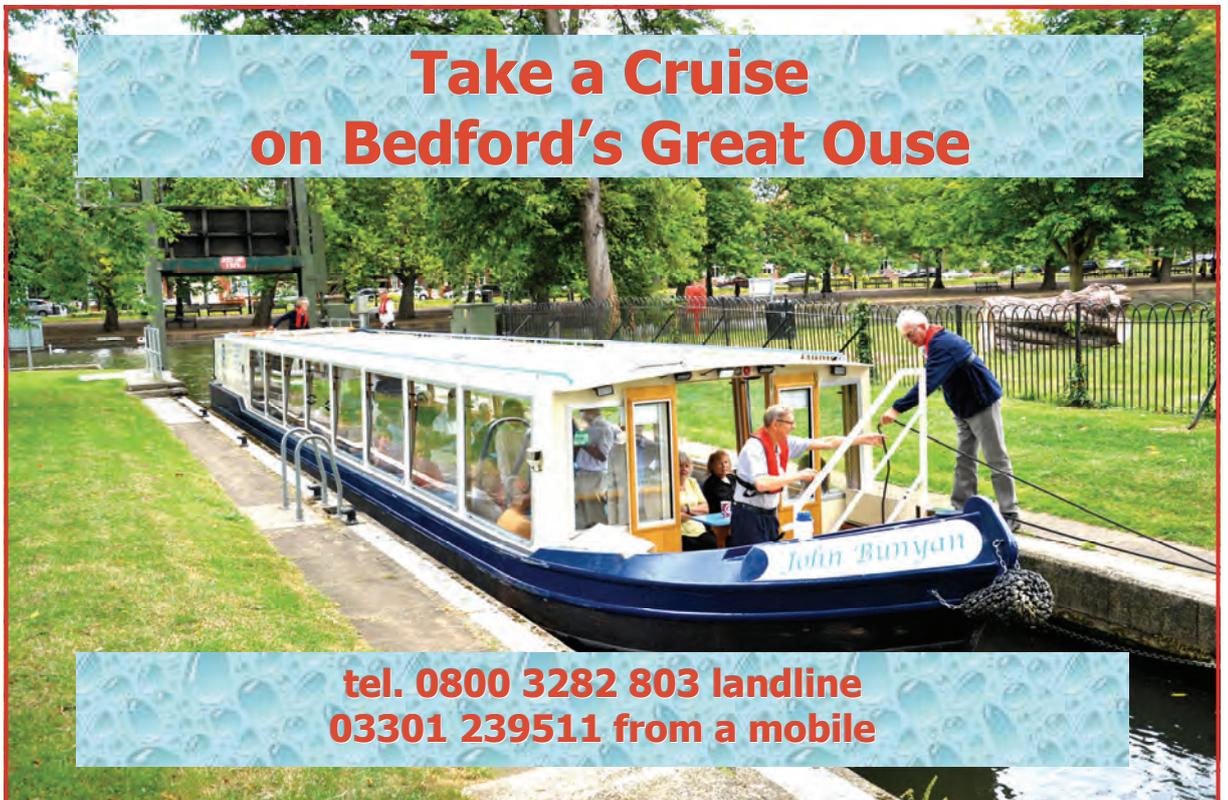
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