

Waterways Minister to Speak at Trust's Conference

The Fifth Annual Partnership Conference of the B&MK Waterway Trust
Tuesday 25 November 2014, 2-5pm
Harpur Suite, Bedford Corn Exchange
St Paul's Square
Bedford MK40 1SL

We are delighted to confirm our guest speakers for the 2014 Conference will be:

Dave Hodgson, Mayor of Bedford
Dan Rogerson MP, Waterways Minister
Meanu Bajwa-Patel, Northampton University
Alex Rowbotham, Open University
Jane Wolfson, Chair of the B&MK Waterway Enterprise

There will also be an opportunity to put questions to the Trust Directors, Consortium Members and the Speakers over refreshments after the conference. The event is free of charge to all members, supporters and partners. To book your place, please contact: ConferenceBookings@b-mkwaterway.org.uk

'Love Bedford' BID supports the *John Bunyan*

New noticeboards promoting the *John Bunyan* have been unveiled at several locations thanks to financial support from the Bedford Business Improvement District (Bedford BID), who have provided a grant of £5,000 to the Community Boat as one of Bedford's 'top tourist attractions'.

The noticeboards are now in place at Sovereigns Quay, the entrance to Priory Marina and by Town Lock. Each noticeboard displays details of the public cruises for September and October from the three pick-up points. At the end of the season, the Public Cruise posters will be replaced by Charter cruises posters and other relevant information.



Christina Rowe of Bedford BID and the 'Blue Caps', with Graham Mabbutt and David Fowler of the B&MK Waterway Trust, at Sovereigns Quay.





View from the Chair

Well, summer has come and gone and the boating season comes to its end. Elsewhere in this issue of *B&MK News* you will read of the success of the *John Bunyan* Community Boat this summer, highlighted by our participation in the Bedford River Festival. Our thanks are due to the many volunteers who literally keep the boat afloat and cruising, as well as those who have taken on responsible roles on our Enterprise Board, which runs the boat.

Progress with the waterway projects continues on a slow and steady course. The new administration members at Milton Keynes Council have been fully briefed, some of whom joined us for the MK VIP Cruise along the Grand Union Canal, hosted by James Griffin of the Wyvern Shipping Company. This cruise showed councillors and officers the potential benefits of development supporting our new Waterway. We have elections in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire Councils in 2015 and so we have to be prepared with briefings for these, too.

We are currently working with Milton Keynes and Central Bedfordshire Councils and the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership to try to include a stretch of Waterway when the A421 between MKC and Junction 13 is dualled.

You will have heard that for our Annual Partnership Conference this year we have the Minister responsible for Waterways, Dan Rogerson MP (who started his political career as a Councillor in Bedford), as our keynote speaker, so do come along on Tuesday 25 November at 2pm to the Harpur Suite in Bedford Town Centre to hear all our latest news and our plans for the future.

During the summer and autumn months, the Trust has again participated in the Ramblers' Walking Week with a 'Future Waterway Route Walk' from Wootton Village Hall to Marston Vale Forest Centre, with a good number of people on a hot Sunday Morning. The Heritage Weekend at Broughton with the talks in St. Lawrence's Church followed by a BBQ in our member John Neal's lovely garden adjoining the church was not supported as fully as usual. Nevertheless, thanks are due to John for hosting the event, and to the volunteers who did the catering and the BBQ.

I hope to see you at our conference in November if you are available to come along.

Graham Mabbutt.

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

B&MK Walk the Route

Twenty-three walkers (plus one dog) took part in our B&MK 'Walk the Route', starting at Wootton Memorial Hall. As in previous years, it was part of the Bedfordshire Ramblers' walking festival.

Our route started following the bridle path, via the piece of B&MK Waterway Trust land, to the blue girder bridge over the A421. This is a very good vantage point from which to see the proposed Waterway route, both northwards to Bell Farm and Ridge Road, and westwards to Fields Road.

Then it was on to Fields Road, where we saw how the Waterway would pass beneath it. Crossing the road, we entered the Berry Wood area and eventually emerged at the A421 underpass, currently the only completed piece of the Waterway (see photo on p. 3). Here, we explained that the Waterway would be in a deep cutting, going underneath the old A421 and into the ditch alongside the Stewartby tip.

At Green Lane, we inspected that ditch and tried to imagine a new road bridge crossing the Waterway at that point. Our walkers then followed the footpath around the northern and western edges of Stewartby Lake, parallel to the route of the Waterway, and hence to our destination at the Forest Centre.

There we met our minibus driver, who cheerfully took most of the walkers back to Wootton, whilst the rest of us took refreshment in the Forest Centre café.

An enjoyable walk was had by all, despite over-running our assumed schedule for the 4.5-mile walk.

Alan Mayo & Chris Fox

B&MK News

Published by the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust.

Editor.....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:

editor@b-mkwaterway.co.uk



'Walk the Route' participants at the A421 underpass, currently the only completed part of the Waterway.



The *John Bunyan* Community Boat taking part in the 2014 Bedford River Festival (see p.7 for more photos).

Bedford River Festival 2014

(This article was originally published in the August 2014 issue of *Closing the Gap*, the newsletter for *John Bunyan* Volunteers.)

As a newbie this year to both the *John Bunyan* Boat and to the Bedford River Festival it was with an open mind that I ventured out on Saturday 19 July to join the team on the Island to talk to the public about the cruises that are available. In the first instance, I hadn't expected anything like the size of the River Festival and nor was I prepared for such a professional and well-publicised pitch. By the time I had got there, the other people sharing the same marquee were desperately trying to get some advertising outside to go with all the Trust hoardings.

I spent the morning of Saturday talking to the festival goers about the public cruises, handing out leaflets about some of the specialist ones, talking about our charter opportunities and realising that there were an awful lot of Bedford people still to learn about the Boat and the Trust. I was also trying to find people who we could add to the growing list of volunteers but while I was on the stand, there was no-one who came along. It seemed a shame that most people that I talked to felt that they could only volunteer once they have retired.

So after a very pleasant two hours spent talking about how exciting our operations are, I then went and joined the boat on its river stand. It really did look magnificent and the best advert for the Boat and the Trust. I spent a very hot and sunny few hours talking about the Boat and handing out leaflets while the Boat sat at our mooring. What a shame we couldn't have done some public cruises on the Saturday. We could have sold the tickets over and over again. Most people were just excited to see the boat and wanted to go on a trip. We were selling cruises for the Sunday from here too and we sold some tickets, but really people wanted to get on the

Boat there and then.

I left on the Saturday as the Boat was about to go out on a trip with the Mayor before the firework display. I got home after 12 hours at the festival looking forward to Day Two.

Sunday's weather wasn't quite as good as Saturday's but I headed out to the mooring for my stint promoting the cruises again. The Boat was away at Newlands steps and it made a big difference to handing out the leaflets and selling the tickets for the cruises when the Boat wasn't there.

A gazebo at the mooring would have given us a chance to have some sort of display for when the Boat wasn't there and would have provided a focal point and some shelter to make this task a little easier (something to think about for next year). Having said that, we sold a number of tickets for the public cruises later on in the day and again had a lovely time chatting to the festival goers and passing out cruise leaflets.

I crewed on the public cruises in the evening. We did three taster cruises which each lasted an hour, and then a sunset cruise to finish off. The atmosphere on these was brilliant. People had seen the boat during the festival and were therefore excited to finally be given the chance to have a go onboard themselves. I worked in the cabin, which is a great way to get a feel of how the cruises are going down, and it really was a lovely atmosphere for all the trips.

So, what did I think to it all? I loved every moment of it. There were some things that we can improve for next year, which is great – how dull would it be if everything worked brilliantly first time! Having said that, I had a great time. I got to tell lots of people about the Boat and about the great reasons why we should all be supporting it and I spent a weekend out in the open, by and on the river, which – let's face it – is an excellent way to pass a couple of days.

Sue Heron



John Bunyan News

What a busy summer! As of mid-September, almost 5,000 passengers had been welcomed aboard and, with another few weeks to go, if the weather is good we may well reach 6,000 passengers this season. What an achievement – so many people out and about enjoying the river and getting a taste of what the B&MK could deliver for tourism and leisure in our area.

Quarter 1 Results

We are here to provide great rivers cruises for all (customers *and* volunteers!) in support of the B&MK Waterway. In the July Trust newsletter we described the aims and objectives for the *John Bunyan*. Our trading year starts in April, and our volunteer Board of Directors reviewed first-quarter trading in July.

Here is our summary for April to June, against our ten objectives:

1. Safety first: no issues of concern in this area, which is great!

2. Customer satisfaction: lots of lovely comments and emails, great! Our customers see us as 'professional and friendly', which is just what we aim to be.

3. Volunteers: at the end of June we had 102 active volunteers (one-third more than last year) of whom 91 are crew, with the rest working ashore. Crew training is intensive and ongoing: 40 crew trained last year and refreshed this year, 30 recently trained and there are another 21 in training. We introduced new social events, a newsletter, a Facebook group and a crew survey in this Quarter.

4. Engaging the public in the work of the Trust and the *John Bunyan*: crew tell us that most passengers look at the literature and maps on board and they are generous in making donations to the Trust (£1,564 this Quarter). However, more needs to be done about publicising the *John Bunyan* and the Trust, as many people are still unaware of our existence or services.

5. Inclusiveness: we are growing our passenger and volunteer numbers from the local area; we carried 1,684 passengers from all age groups on 52 crew shifts (20 public, 28 charter, 4 for the Enterprise) in this Quarter.

6. Boat condition: no issues of concern, great!

7. Stakeholders and partners: the Bedford Business Improvement District is supporting the *John Bunyan* financially again as one of Bedford's 'top tourist attractions', with a grant of £5,000 to assist with much-needed noticeboards and posters (see p.1), and the Trust Board is pleased with what we are achieving.

8. Business sustainability: we have met all our obligations and use a risk register to help us anticipate and manage threats.

9. Financial support to the Trust: this Quarter, we took £19,000 sales income and made £2,000 net profit after deducting all our costs, including lease payments to the Trust. This can be compared with 2013, when we weren't yet trading in this Quarter.

10. Enhancing Trust assets: we have paid all the lease payments due, which the Trust will use to repay the boat loans, and we no longer need any cashflow support from the Trust.

The River Festival in July 2014

Over one-third of our volunteers were involved, afloat or ashore, in our first River Festival presence, where for two days the *John Bunyan* was on public show to thousands of local people.

We raised almost £3,000, recruited eight new volunteers, hosted six receptions for the Mayor and his influential guests, took part in three live radio interviews, hosted Three Counties Friday Drive Time Programme, joined in the boat parades, gave out thousands of leaflets and ran four successful Sunday evening cruises!

Quarter 2 Results (July to September 2014)

As of September 2014, we were heading for over 150 volunteer crew shifts (often the same as cruises but sometimes, particularly on public cruising days, we do two or more cruises on one shift). This totals some 4,500 volunteer hours donated on the water, plus all the 'unseen' hours behind the scenes onshore in sales, marketing, training, scheduling, maintenance, cleaning, risk management, accounting and business planning.

We are receiving growing numbers of appreciative emails from both customers and Boatmasters, commenting in particular on the professional and friendly service that an increasingly confident volunteer crew are delivering.

All of this hard work is delivering terrific results in terms of our two key objectives: raising awareness of the river in Bedford and the B&MK, and raising money to support the work of the Trust. We will meet and quite possibly exceed the targets we set in our Business Plan for this year.

Long-term MCA Licence achieved

I'm delighted to say that we now have a Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) passenger safety certificate (licence) to 2018. This shows how satisfied the MCA has become with our operations. Here is our Safety Officer's report of their recent visit:

On Thursday, the MCA inspector was on the Boat to do their annual audit of boat operations.



The *John Bunyan* Community Boat loading passengers about to embark on a Public Cruise.

He began the day by congratulating us all on our success when an MCA mystery shopper visited sometime in the past week or so. She came aboard incognito as a paying passenger and reported back. She commented on two things: there was a gap between the boat and the stage but was impressed that the crew drew this to the attention of every passenger and requested they take care. She was also pleased to be warned of the small step into the cabin and the way the crew members paid attention throughout the loading process. Her second comment was regarding those with mobility issues loading at the stern (apparently she was unaware we had a lift and that was why they boarded there). Our inspector was very pleased because he had told his colleagues he doubted anything negative would come through her feedback from our operation. We proved him correct!

The inspector spent the entire morning trip aboard and questioned the Boatmaster and myself extensively, particularly with regard to what training we offer our new volunteers. He gave us a clean sheet and was extremely complimentary about our safety arrangements.

Licence for bar and music

I'm also pleased to say that our application for a Premises Licence to allow us to provide a bar and music on board has been granted, subject to all agreed conditions with Responsible Authorities. We are now in the process of completing the paperwork for the licence and refining our operating processes and training, so that we will be ready to implement this in a suitable way in 2015. It will certainly help us to

build our charter business with the hotels in Bedford.

Looking ahead to Winter

Our last cruising day will be Sunday 2 November, and we will reopen for business on 1 April 2015 (really!)

The Board has decided that river conditions are too variable for winter cruising, and although some canal societies run successful 'Santa Cruises', we do not have the same type of market opportunity. As we gain more experience of the winter weather, these are decisions that we might revisit, but it's also true that after seven months on the water, both the *John Bunyan* and her crew could do with a well-deserved rest.

However, there's a mass of winter maintenance and improvement work to do on the Boat, a heap of administration processes to tidy up, end of season/start of season training to organise and a Business Plan for 2015 to write. Oh, and we'll be taking charter bookings for 2015 so do think of us if you have a special occasion coming up.

So we'll be busy through the winter months, just in a different way and hopefully with time for several beers and the chance to reflect on a job well done for the Trust in 2014!

Jane Wolfson

Volunteer Chair,
B&MK Waterway Enterprises Ltd



Projects Group News

The parkland first!

In preparation for construction of the Waterway, all of the land needs to be in public ownership. We are quite close to achieving this and are now looking for people to undertake a number of tasks, such as:

Writing up walks using the Ramblers Club template so that a variety of walks along the route can be made available on the web. Part of doing this might be to follow up with those who have organised walks in the past and put all the information into the template for publishing. Liaison with the Ramblers would be helpful.

Looking for ideas about how we might flag up and identify the route

Organising community groups to adopt a section of the route

Fundraising or identifying sources for tools, equipment etc.

Dredging: anyone want to join the dredging project group?

The river at Bedford needs some maintenance to enable the *John Bunyan* to travel up to Kempston. A small team are proposing a dredging project, which would be carried out in partnership with the Environment Agency. Would you like to be involved? Do we need to raise funds for a digger? There are all sorts of possibilities for the group to explore.

Taking the long view: working up a proposal to the Waterway Recovery Group

If you don't know of the way the Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) support local communities in developing waterways then do look at their website. The Projects Group needs someone to act as liaison with the WRG so that we can present them in time with plans for collaboration.

Fundraising needed

We have had success over the years with small and large bids to the Lottery and other charities. We need members who are prepared to take this work forward to volunteer. There are lots of pots of money we can apply for and our success rate is quite good. Training and support can be provided.

For further information or to volunteer for any of these opportunities, please contact:
Marilyn, Projects Group Chair
Email: marilyn.leask@ntlworld.com
Tel: 07568 520447

Obituaries

Dave Darvill, 1932–2014

Many members will know Dave Darvill as the guy who looked after and delivered the display boards to many of the functions where the Trust had a display stand. He and his wife Heather also spent many hours manning the display stands, too.

After a short surprise illness, Dave Darvill died on 27 June, following a rapid decline this year owing to a brain tumour. The Trust was represented at his funeral by a number of members.

Dave was born in London. He met Heather in Carshalton, Surrey, where she worked in the library. They were married in 1956, and have two sons, Andrew and Simon, and two grandchildren.

As a young man, Dave played for Dulwich Hamlet football club, where he was described as 'one of the club's finest ever goalkeepers'. He worked in shipping sales for a ship-building company, for which he travelled to the Far East.

Since 1976, he and Heather had lived in Leighton Buzzard, where they became very involved in Scouting. Dave was a bell-ringer at St Barnabas, and also became a Churchwarden.

Dave and Heather owned a timeshare in a narrowboat. Dave extended this interest by learning narrowboat painting and also took much pleasure in general landscape painting. Dave also provided some visuals of the *John Bunyan* Boat for us to go and sell from whilst the Boat itself was being built.

As well as playing a key role in the Trust, Dave was an active member of Inland Waterways Association (IWA) Milton Keynes Branch, participating in the Canal Clean-ups and other events.

Vernon Draper

Events Calendar 2014



Sunday 19 October	Wedding Fayre at The Barns Hotel Come and visit the B&MK Community Boat stand
Wednesday 12 November	Communications Group Meeting Canal & River Trust Offices, Milton Keynes, 3pm
Tuesday 18 November	Projects Group Meeting Canal & River Trust Offices, Milton Keynes, 7pm
Tuesday 18 November	B&MK Board Meeting Canal & River Trust Offices, Milton Keynes, 8pm
Tuesday 25 November	Fifth Annual Partnership Conference Harpur Suite, Bedford Corn Exchange, 1.45pm-5pm

5,000 Passengers for the *John Bunyan*



During the Summer season, the *John Bunyan* Community Boat was proud to welcome aboard its 5,000th passenger of 2014, Mrs. Cheryl Morris of Bromham, pictured above with two *John Bunyan* Boat volunteers, Chris Hillyard and John Blackadder.

IWA Raffle Raising Funds for B&MK

Purchasing tickets for the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) Raffle will mean the B&MK Waterway Trust receiving a share in the proceeds.

The IWA's National Waterways Restoration Raffle aims to raise at least £10,000 to benefit waterway restoration projects across the country, including the B&MK Waterway.

The raffle gives you the opportunity to decide which project you want to support with every ticket purchase; once the raffle has been drawn, the nominations for each project will be converted into a percentage of the total amount raised. The B&MK already has 52 nominations.

The percentage of total nominations that a project has will determine the percentage of the total profit from the raffle that they are given.

To purchase your raffle tickets, visit <http://www.waterways.org.uk/raffle>



Passengers queuing to board the Boat at the Bedford River Festival.



The *John Bunyan* passing The Park Hotel during the Festival.



Weekly and Short Break Holiday Hire

4-8 berth self drive Luxury Narrow Boats



Excellent Boats on a Beautiful Canal

Cruise through the waterside parks of Milton Keynes

Our base at Linslade is within weekend reach of the Waterways Museum at Stoke Bruerne or the Chiltern Hills and Aylesbury. Choice of exciting one or two week cruises including the River Thames.

Also 'Waterside Cottage' (sleeps up to 11) set in the boatyard grounds

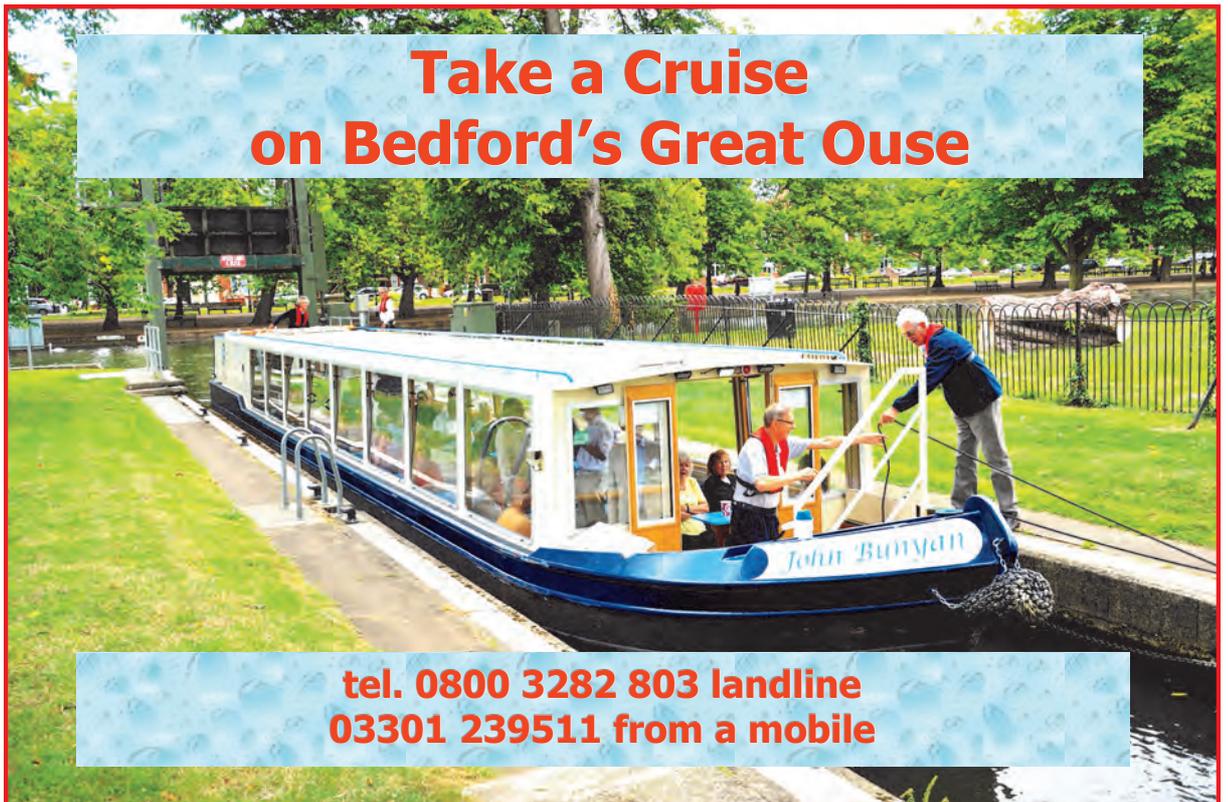
The Wyvern Shipping Co Ltd

Rothschild Road, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard, Beds, LU7 2TF

Tel: 01525 372355 Fax: 01525 852308

www.canalholidays.co.uk Email: James@canalholidays.co.uk

Take a Cruise on Bedford's Great Ouse



**tel. 0800 3282 803 landline
03301 239511 from a mobile**

B&MK WATERWAY NEWS is published by the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Trust, a non profit-making company limited by guarantee (No.5760839). Registered office 30 St John Street Newport Pagnell MK16 8HJ and a Registered Charity (No.1114294). Contact us at enquiries@b-mkwaterway.co.uk or Tel 01908 302592 (mornings)