

IWA Visit BMK



Saturday 12th March saw the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) Board come to Bedford for the first time. They met at Box End Water Park bright and early, had their own Board meeting during the morning, and then a group from the B&MK Waterway Trust and Enterprise Board joined them for a presentation about the B&MK Waterway Park over lunch. We were also joined by John Hodgson and his wife Enid – John was one of the founder members of the Trust and brought with him a lot of history about the project.

After lunch everyone boarded the *John Bunyan* for a short cruise from Sovereign Quay. We were joined by the MP for Bedford, Mohammed Yasin, as we all took the opportunity to enjoy some early spring sunshine.



On the *John Bunyan*

After disembarking the group went on to visit the new landing stage where we were joined by Cllr James Valentine (see page 4). He and Tom Tagg from the Trust talked the IWA through the construction of the landing stage including the difficulties of undertaking such a project at the start of the winter in pouring rain and a lot of mud!

During the visit Paul Rogers, the chair of the IWA, emphasised that the IWA are extremely keen to work with the Trust and do all they can to support the Waterway project. They bring with them a great



Tom Tagg (BMK Eastern Project Group), Paul Rodgers (IWA Chairman), Jane Hamilton and Cllr James Valentine (Borough Councillor for Kempston West) at Kempston with the new landing stage visible in the background.

deal of experience in regenerating waterways, working with volunteers and pulling in a wide range of funding for projects. We certainly hope to see a lot more of some of the IWA Board members and link up more closely with local branches. All in all, everyone agreed it was a thoroughly worthwhile day!

bmk news

PATRON
Sir Samuel Whitbread
KCVO

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View from the Chair

One thing I have learnt since I took on the job of Chair of the B&MK Waterway Trust some 7 years ago is that there is never a dull moment! But being busy sometimes means you get caught up in the detail and forget to step back and reflect a little. Spring and the start of a new year seems like a good time to take stock of what we have achieved over the past few years. The Trust and Enterprise Board are currently doing just that to help us think through next steps and new business plans for the next few years.

Two of our big successes are the *John Bunyan* in Bedford and, last year, *Electra* launched on the Grand Union in Milton Keynes. The boats have added a new dimension to our activities – taking an increasing number of happy passengers on a wide range of cruises, they not only publicise the Waterway Park, but generate an all-important income for the Trust.

This means that since 2017 we have been able to invest in feasibility work to help us, as advocates for the Waterway, persuade other agencies to support us and take a serious look at investing in the Waterway in the long term.

We have invested around £80k in four pieces of work which we have waved at others and said “just look what a new Waterway can do!”. It’s all very well to say a new Waterway will be great for all of us but to persuade potential investors to give it serious thought requires evidence and hard facts.

To help us in our task in lobbying from the local level right up to government we now have

- A digital map of the route showing a wide range of features and which others can download and use
- A breakdown of the likely construction cost of the project
- An economic analysis which demonstrates how much a new waterway can bring into the local economy
- And a report which demonstrates broadly that the Waterway can probably help reduce local flooding

As a result of our investment and the evidence we now have about the Waterway Park, the project is now benefitting from significant external funding of around £250,000 - this is a huge step forward.

The Environment Agency and the regional water resource organisation, Water Resources East, are taking our initial flood management study and developing it into a much more comprehensive piece of work, looking at both flood management and water transfer potential – both increasingly important in the context of climate change.

With a focus on the need to increase biodiversity and offset the impacts of roads and development on the environment, National Highways (formerly Highways England) are proposing to invest in feasibility work to look at

how increased planting and landscaping along the route of the waterway can help.

Finally at the local level Bedford Borough Council and the Environment Agency have made generous contributions to our new landing stage at Kempston Mill.

So, positive investment by others in our project – exactly what we have been pressing for. I will keep you briefed on the outcome of current feasibility studies and very much hope that this will lead to further investment and support in order to get the ball rolling for much bigger sums of capital investment.

Unfortunately, not everything has been positive. Plans for government led initiatives across the Oxford to Cambridge Arc have gone very quiet along with a much-anticipated opportunity for us to secure funding. But we are still going very much in the right direction. There will be other opportunities to use the growing pool of evidence about the benefits of the Waterway.

We must also not forget that sections of the Waterway are now in the ground at Bedford Commercial Park and Campbell Wharf in Milton Keynes.

So, after a long wait and a lot of work, external funding is now being invested in the project. Securing significant capital investment will be a long haul....but we are definitely moving in the right direction!

Jane Hamilton

Vernon Draper 1946-2022

We regret to report that Vernon died on January 22nd of this year. He was a great support to the Trust in the early years. Amongst many other tasks he hosted meetings of the MK Project Group and managed the “Mark the Route” post project in Milton Keynes.

More recently Vernon has been a valued volunteer on the *John Bunyan*. He was an active member of Taverners Boat Club and also did valuable work for the local IWA branch, the Buckingham Canal Society, and several groups near his home.

His quiet support will be missed by the Trust as well as his friends and family, to whom we extend our thoughts. ●

BMK News

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Electra – getting ready for our first full season!



We ended 2021 with some very successful 'Coffee & Cake' morning cruises in November, and 'Christmas Cruises' with mulled wine, mince pies and clotted cream in December. For safety reasons we cruised with the bow windows open, and invited guests to come and 'enjoy the great outdoors from the great indoors' with their coats on. It worked and we were rewarded with multiple sightings of kingfishers on bare branches. *Electra's* Elves decorated her inside and out.



25 cruises in November and early December completed *Electra's* fantastic first season, bringing total numbers to 189 cruises, with 1,251 guests, run by 46 volunteers.

Volunteer news

We welcome Kayleigh Hawkins in her new role of Bookings Manager, and Emma Hall as Quartermaster with responsibility for all catering and bar supplies to help keep guests happy on board.

New boat crew are in the process of qualifying now, ready for the new season. By April we expect to have achieved our goal of doubling our boat crew, so that we are easily able to run cruises right through from April to December 2022.

Around half our guests say that they first found out about *Electra* through Social Media, which is thanks to our volunteer marketeers, in particular Gill Prince (photos), Bhavini Lakhani (design), and Lindsey Patraiko our volunteer Social Media Manager who week in, week out, looks after our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. It's amazing to think that in April last year we had no presence at all, and now we have 880 Facebook likes, 600 Instagram followers and 500 Twitter followers!

As we grow, we need to recruit more shore volunteers. There are current roles in marketing, outreach, fundraising, project management and catering – and Lindsey is looking for a social media assistant too. If one of those roles floats your boat, fill in our Expression of Interest (EOI) form on the website.

Distinguished guest

We were delighted to welcome on board The Countess Howe, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire during December. She wrote afterwards:

"Thank you so much for giving me the most wonderful canal boat experience on Electra. She is such a beautiful boat and gliding down the canal in almost silence was a real treat, as was spotting the kingfisher perched above us! ... Organising an operation on this scale is

huge, and the dedication and commitment of everyone involved is truly inspiring. I shall champion your cause as far and as wide as I can ... Thank you for introducing me to such an enjoyable leisure activity!"

New for 2022: Art on the Water

Adam and Liddy, who run Something Less Boring ("Making art and sport fun, healthy, creative and inclusive, regardless of age or ability") ran a first "art on the water" workshop on *Electra* in November. This went so well that they have booked six charters for a range of small group art sessions in April to July 2022, under the heading of "A gentle creative cruise on the Grand Union Canal". Booking is open now.



We look forward to other businesses also chartering *Electra* as a venue in 2022 –to find out more, contact *Electra*.

Looking forward to next season!

As we go to press, the new season is about to start in early April. The programme is on page 6.



Advertising in BMK News

We welcome advertisements in *BMK News*

Rates are:

Whole page :	£120
Back Page:	£150
Half Page	£80
Quarter page:	£50
Eighth page:	£30

Buy two, get one free! Book a place for three consecutive editions, and only pay for the first two. For details contact: editor@b-mkwaterway.co.uk

Kempston Landing Stage Update

We are very pleased to be able to report that, after a long and tortuous struggle over several years, we have finally constructed a new landing stage at the Head of Navigation on the river Gt Ouse at Kempston Mill. We now have a solid working platform which is available for use by river craft as the photographs show.

Last minute negotiations with the chosen contractor (Land and Water) were necessary due to some large increases in their price for the work, brought about in the main by severe inflation in the construction sector last year.

Therefore, to get the work completed before further price increases, along with the risk of not being able to work during the flood season, we had to reduce the work being done in this first phase.

An intended start in September didn't materialise and work finally got underway in November.

Construction work in the winter is always a challenge, particularly when it is dependent on not only the weather, but also the adjacent river levels. Unfortunately our contractor encountered a number of issues which delayed the completion until mid-December, but fortunately the flood waters held off until the work had been finished and the contractor had departed, so we were extremely lucky to have completed the works just in time.

Construction was not without its hiccoughs, but that is nearly always the case on such projects and there are a number of details which need finalising.

During a recent visit by the Board of the Inland Waterways Association (IWA), they expressed their praise for what the Trust and the small team of volunteers have achieved in constructing the landing stage, acknowledging how difficult it can be for charitable organisations to deliver physical projects on the waterways.

Unfortunately as mentioned, the scope of work had to be reduced and the landscaping was not able to be carried out as we would have wished. The disadvantage of finishing the work so late in the season was that it left the site extremely muddy over the winter. This has



left us (and of course the local users of the area) with an unsightly spoil heap that we will not be able to remove until the ground has dried out sufficiently.

Despite the weather over the winter, the team of volunteers has worked hard maintaining the public all-weather gravel path, as well as levelling off and seeding the area adjacent to the river downstream of the landing stage, where some of the new grass is just now beginning to show through.





We are currently in the process of obtaining quotes from local groundworks companies to complete the remaining work to form the access ramp and the landing stage decking. We are keen to get this started as soon as possible and will tackle the spoil heap at the same time. There will then be the final seeding and tidying up of the site which the Trust will carry out to save cost, when all offers of help from any volunteers would be most welcome – please contact Julian Armitage.

We very much appreciate the patience and understanding of residents during the construction process and hope that the end product will be to everyone's liking. ●



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Pictures by Tom Tagg of

1. Before construction began
2. Vegetation & reeds cleared
3. Driving sheet piles
4. Driving sheet piles with air hammer
5. Capping beam concreted
6. Phase 1 works complete



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Here is the menu of cruises being offered by *Electra* this year. Contact details for bookings or queries are shown at the bottom.

Choose your cruise

Do you want a cruise just for you and your friends/colleagues? Book a Private Charter. Electra is great for family celebrations, group outings, and business events. Private Charters depart from Campbell Wharf on Thursdays and Saturdays.

Choose your date, start time, and catering options, and book online. Just a few of you? Join us on one of our great public cruises.

Book online

bmkwaterway.org/electra

Choose your food

Want food? No problem. We have cruises with fish and bubbles, coffee and cake, cream teas. We source our food locally as much as we can. Our suppliers include Camphill, Macintyre, Jam MK, Moore's Fish and Chips, Namji for curries and Concrete Cow for our own Electra Beer. Electra is fully licensed and we carry a small range of drinks and snacks to enjoy on board.



Private Charters

What	Where	When/ how long	Price
Daytime Charter	Campbell Wharf – Linford Wharf return	10.30 or 14.30 Thursdays and Saturdays April to October (2¼ hrs)	£150 Morning coffee & cake or afternoon cream tea at £6 pp
Summer Evening Charter	Campbell Wharf – Linford Wharf return	18.00 Saturdays mid-May to early August (2¼ hrs)	£150 Pre-order 'bubbles & nibbles' at extra cost
Two Aqueducts Half-day Charter	Great Linford Manor Park – Cosgrove Lock return	10.30-15.00 Wednesdays May to September (4½ hrs)	£270 Plus £11 pp for Morning Coffee & Ploughman's Lunch
Fenny Stratford Half-day Charter	Campbell Wharf – Fenny Stratford return	10.30 – 15.00 Thursdays July to September (4½ hrs)	£270 Plus £11 pp for Morning Coffee & Ploughman's Lunch
Custom Charters	Available on request, subject to the availability of boat and crew	Routes, time, dates and catering agreed with you	Prices vary according to plan

Public Cruises

What	Where	When/ how long	Price*
Cruise One Way to Great Linford	Campbell Wharf – Great Linford Manor Park	11.30 Tuesday April to September (75 mins)	£9 (full) £6 (child) £24 (fam)
Relax through Stanton Low Park	Great Linford Manor Park – New Bradwell return	14.30 Tuesday April to September (2 hrs)	£15 £10 £40
Coffee & Cake Morning Cruise	Great Linford Manor Park – New Bradwell return	10.45 Wednesday April & May (2 hrs)	£21 £16 £64
Cream Tea Cruise	Campbell Wharf – Linford Wharf return	15.00 Friday and Sunday April to October (2¼ hrs)	£21 £16 £64
	Also Great Linford Linford – New Bradwell return	15.00 Wednesday April & May	
Fish & Chips Lunch Cruise	Campbell Wharf – Linford Wharf return	12.00 Friday April/May and September/October (2¼ hrs)	£25
Fish & Bubbles Evening Cruise	Campbell Wharf – Linford Wharf return	18.00 Friday mid-May to early August (2¼ hrs)	£28
Curry Evening Cruise	Campbell Wharf – Linford Wharf return	18.00 Thursday mid-May to early August (2¼ hrs)	£30
Jubilee Cream Tea Cruise	Campbell Wharf – Linford Wharf return	14.30 Thursday, Friday and Sunday in June (2¼ hrs)	£25 £20 £80
Explore the Canal at Great Linford	Campbell Wharf – Linford Wharf return with a 45 minute guided walk led by The Parks Trust	10.00 Third Thursday May-July (3 hrs)	£18
Little Legs Walk One Way Cruise	Short cruise on Electra combined with a short walk led by our Canal & River Trust. Partners.	9.00 and 11.30 Thursday in School Holidays; also Tuesday in late May, Summer (2 hour total time)	£6 £4 £16

* Pubic cruise prices are for adults / children (2-17) / family of four (2 adults/2 children or 1 adult/3 children)

Book online

bmkwaterway.org/electra

Booking queries

bookings.electra@bmkwaterway.org



Events Calendar 2022



14 June 19:30	AGM Box End Park. Notice on back page
November	Annual Partnership Conference. To be confirmed.

John Bunyan Update

April to September will see the familiar sight of the blue and white *John Bunyan* Community Boat gracing the River Great Ouse in and

family and friends as you cruise along the River Great Ouse from Priory Marina to Castle Mill Lock and return.



© Steve Ashley 2021

around Bedford. Over 50,000 passengers have enjoyed cruising on the vessel in the past 9 years on various trips, from Kempston in the West to Great Barford in the East, manned entirely by volunteers, for the benefit of the residents of Bedford and surrounding districts.

This summer the *John Bunyan* Community Boat will be retaining popular cruises from previous years plus introducing a gin tasting in conjunction with The Secret Bar, curry night in conjunction with Thali & Tandoor and Irish nights with Inis Eire. As part of the community the *John Bunyan*'s aim is to provide something for everyone whilst involving local businesses.

Irish Band Evening Cruise

Enjoy a lively music evening cruise featuring Inis Eire who are a Ceilidh band providing amazing music from Ireland as we cruise along Bedford's Embankment. Inis Eire are a versatile trio of Irish musicians providing high quality classical, folk, pop and ceilidh performances.

Evening Jazz Evening Cruise

This year Jazz evening cruise artist line up:
 22nd April – Rachel & Friends
 19th May – The Steve Vintner Trio
 16th June – Cool Jazz Collective Trio, with Elaine Hatton and Neil Riches
 21st July - Richard Exall, Amy Roberts and Dave Browning
 18th August – Lincoln Noel Trio
 8th September – Denny Ilett Trio
 21st September – Tom Syson

Cream Tea Cruise

Treat yourself to a leisurely two-hour cruise with a cream tea served to your table and experience a different view of Bedford's tranquil countryside. While away an afternoon with

Evening Thali & Tandoor supper cruise

We turn the *John Bunyan* into a floating restaurant to provide a cruise with an authentic thali meal. Enjoy a relaxing evening cruise as the sun goes down along The Embankment, past the 12th century Castle Mound, and under the historic town bridge - all whilst enjoying a traditional thali curry supper. Departing from Priory Marina to pick up the Thali Tandoor curry at Newnham Steps.

Tea & Cake Cruise

Cruise along the River Great Ouse from Priory Marina to the Embankment and return. Enjoy a delicious slice of locally made cake with endless tea or coffee.

Royal Platinum Jubilee Afternoon Tea

A special cruise to celebrate our Sovereign's Platinum Jubilee. The *John Bunyan* will be decked out and we've commissioned a special Jubilee Tea Cruise from Crème Brew Lait, including a glass of prosecco to toast Her Majesty.



© Steve Ashley 2022

John Bunyan Gin Tasting Cruise

For the gin lovers the *John Bunyan* is pleased to bring you a Gin Tasting Experience as we cruise through Bedford Town Lock to the Embankment. The cruise includes tasting various gins and the history of gin. We will top the evening off with a small quiz based on the history of gin. ●

Contact Us.

For more information and to support or join the Trust, or volunteer with one of our boats, please see:

www.bmkwaterway.org

Notice of AGM

The 16th Annual General Meeting
of the
Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust
will be held on
14th June 2022 at 19:30
at Box End Park, Box End, Bedford MK43 8RQ

Only full (not Associate) members of the Trust are entitled to a vote at the meeting. The agenda, report & accounts, and minutes of the previous meeting will be available on the website and at the meeting.

AGENDA

Ordinary Business:

- To receive the Minutes of the 15th Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 24th June 2021.
- To receive and consider the Report of the Directors and the Statement of Accounts and the Balance Sheet of the Company for the year ended 30th April 2022.
- To elect directors for the coming period.
- To receive a report from B&MK Waterway Enterprises Ltd.

Date: 1st April 2022

By Order of the Board

Don Allison – Company Secretary, Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust, 30 St John Street, Newport Pagnell MK16 8HJ

20 years ago

The clipping below comes from the Sunday Citizen at around this time of year in 2002. It remains as relevant today as it was then.

www.miltonkeynes.co.uk

SUNDAY CITIZEN March 31, 2002 5

Tension rising as new canal 'oil' is launched

By Richard Cooper

IT had been staring experts in the face! Engineers on the new Milton Keynes to Bedford waterway have been puzzling over methods to conquer Brogborough Hill.

Options had included producing a contraption similar to the impressive Falkirk Wheel or a barge lift. Instead, they have chosen a much simpler path.

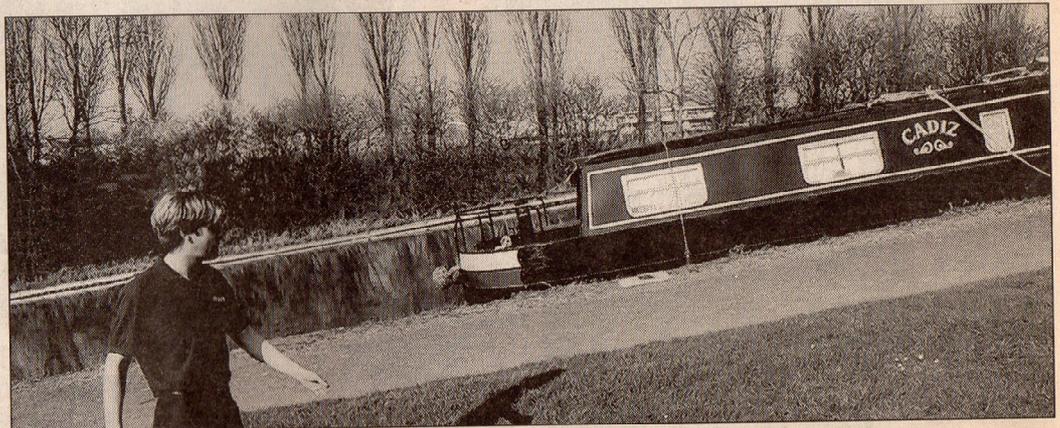
The brains behind the scheme are now considering building a sloping canal which means barges will be able to easily ascend and descend the troublesome hill.

On the way up the incline towards Bedford, from the east, canal boats will have to pick up speed to about 30 knots.

But the descent to Milton Keynes will be much faster, with barges coasting all the way.

Scientists have discovered a new method to make sure the water stays in the sloping canal.

The secret lies in "a sprayfold oil", manufactured by a Milton Keynes



Gradients on canals will no longer pose problems for boats.

company, which increases the water's surface tension.

The Citizen can reveal that it will be officially launched tomorrow morning (Monday).

The method was pioneered centuries ago in Spain where it was used to navigate canals up and down the foothills of the Pyrenees.

An expert said: "It's so obvious! I don't know why we didn't think of it earlier. Anyone who has seen water flow down a sloped drainpipe will know that the process can be quite easily reversed.

"One simply has to transfer and then redirect the energy in the opposite direction. This can be adjusted

according to the gradient.

"The oil will work as a catalyst."

The breakthrough has also made waves among the scientific fraternity, with waterways engineers from all over the world waiting to adopt the design, if it is successful.

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mkcitizen.co.uk

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