



The WABC newsletter

www.wabc.org.uk

From the Editor

We have come to the end of our second operational season and, all round, it certainly has been a good one – we are financially stable, we have a proven craft in WOW-one, we have a wonderful team of volunteers and we have exceeded our objectives for numbers of passengers getting out on the river. Well done all!

The one downside is that the Riverside development, so vital to our smooth operational running, which, despite the efforts of the SODC Development Team, is still not complete. At the time of writing we have no firm timescales to work with. We can just hope the revised drawings submitted to EA Licensing and SODC Planning go through the acceptance process quickly and at that point we can hope firm dates will emerge. The one thing we can anticipate with some confidence is that all our 2023 operations will continue to be based at Benson and we will once again be dependent upon the kindness of the local residents and Benson Marina. We are so thankful for that.

Yet, let's not get downhearted. We are used to disappointments as there have been many challenges we have had to face over the last five years and we have overcome them all. This one will be no exception.

Ours is indeed a wonderful world, but it is also one of many frustrations!

John Jenkins MBE

Chair of Trustees

John.Jenkins@wabc.org.uk



(photos by Chris Haigh)

Disappointment - just in time for Christmas!

Not what anyone wants to have but it happened to us when the Environment Agency (EA) objected to the proposed plans for our Riverside development, specifically the drawings for the passenger pontoon and ramp. This was totally unexpected as we had earlier passed through the Pre-App process and a great disappointment to not only ourselves but also the SODC Development Team.

It seems the problem the EA envisaged was when/if other craft tied up to the security railings included on the ramp and pontoon, they would further reduce the navigable width of the river at Riverside so creating a potential obstruction. As EA approval is also a requirement of the SODC Planning process then that failed as well. So back to square one for the design of the ramp and pontoon!

Following extensive consultations with Marine Engineers, Coulam, the SODC Development Team have created a revised design calculated to overcome the railings issue and these have now been submitted to SODC Planning and the Environment Agency for their approval. Now we wait!

Sincere thanks are due to the SODC Development Team for reacting to the issue so quickly and coming up with what we all hope will be an acceptable proposal for all parties.

2022 passenger numbers exceed expectations!

What a busy summer season 2022 indeed was! Perhaps it was the exceptionally hot and prolonged dry weather? Or maybe the WABC message is spreading out there? Probably a combination of both.

Although we had a relatively late start – due to over-run of new volunteer training - we managed 40 passenger voyages taking over 120 passengers out on WOW-one exceeding both the previous year and our expectations by some margin!. Additionally, we managed a further 40 training trips for our volunteers thus keeping our brilliant crew members and WOW-one more than just a little busy!

For many passengers it was their first trip out on the river; for many more, hitherto thwarted by disability or immobility, a trip on the river was just a wild dream. All were not disappointed – we make dreams happen!

Roll on the 2023 season!

We are recruiting

We are always looking out for local willing volunteers and with the new season approaching this year is no exception. We have an urgent need to increase support in our back-office functions. We are seeking an Administration Officer to help with voyage bookings and crew rostering, a Fundraising Officer to add to our ability to raise club funds and a Marketing Officer to help us spread our 'message' to the general public. If anyone out there has any thoughts on the subject please contact the Editor.

Meanwhile, hear from one of our new WABC volunteers...



I joined WABC last spring after seeing a request for volunteers in our local magazine. I am so pleased that I did!

I have enjoyed every moment of my training and being involved in trips allowing those who would otherwise be excluded from enjoying boating on the Thames. I had no previous experience of boating at all when I joined but have been met with nothing but enthusiasm and support from other club members.

Once trained I could start to be involved with client trips, which have all been very different experiences, and so rewarding to witness the pleasure our passengers get from their trip, which could involve fishing, a picnic, nature watching, even driving the boat with support from the skipper. All the people I met have

been delighted with the service. I hope to be involved in many more trips next year.

I am now a qualified skipper and am anticipating lots of trips when I can put my training into practice and meet lots of new passengers to enjoy trips along the river with. We have a little more training to do and some practice sessions in WOW-one before we go back out on the river. Also we are planning to put together some interesting factsheets about the river and things our clients can see along the way.

I would encourage anyone with some time to give to spend it with WABC.

Jane Haigh, Skipper

Special Interest Groups

We are keen to introduce a slightly more focused dimension to certain WOW-one voyages this season through Special Interest Groups where a group of passengers with a common interest can come together to undertake a favourite 'hobby', such as bird-watching, fishing or photography. We undertook a couple of fishing trips last season and we are looking to do more in 2023 as well as bird-watching for the twitchers and photography for the camera hungry amongst our publics.

We are very fortunate to have an expert photographer amongst our number, Chris Haigh, who has offered to lead our Photography SIG. Many of his amazing photographs have appeared in previous issues of this Newsletter – below is an article by Chris - see Camera Corner - and a further set of incredible photographs.



What a contrast to those hot, lazy days of last summer remember? (photos by Chris Haigh)



Our lovely river wearing its winter cloak... (photos by Chris Haigh)

Camera Corner

The river Thames starts in the Cotswolds and travels over 210 miles through the heart of England's most picturesque towns and countryside, right into the centre of the country's metropolis (London) eventually to the North Sea. It is the longest river wholly within England, it has 45 locks, the Thames path (a 184 mile national trail) and three areas of outstanding natural beauty. There are many varied events that take place along the Thames including Swan Upping, rowing races (the University Boat Race, Henley Royal Regatta to name a few), walking challenges, music and literary festivals.

The river provides varied and often unique opportunities for capturing images. Even the stretch that the club's Wheelyboat operates (Goring to Days Lock, Dorchester-on-Thames) provides many great and varied photographs, from boats, buildings, bridges, landscapes and wildlife.

Over the last year I have been taking photographs of the Thames and had the opportunity to be on WOW-one, which gives a different perspective by being close to the water level.

I'll look forward to undertaking more voyages in 2023.

PS – anyone interested in joining the Photography SIG please contact the Editor.



WABC film creates a stir!

We made a great step forward with our marketing plans last autumn by producing our very own video – a promotional piece of six minutes, which is now available on our website, www.wabc.org.uk - you can't miss it!

The initiative started way back in the summer when, thanks to our volunteer, Jan Ridley, we made contact with a 'coffee group' at Benson Millstream Centre. They had recently made a successful promotional video thanks to the kind auspices of Henry Crowther who was keen to expand his portfolio and offered to produce a video for WABC free of charge. An opportunity not to be missed! And so it came to pass.

Since its launch in October, we have shown it to dozens of different friends and supporters in various parts of the UK and around the world with resoundingly positive reviews – great! We are sure it will attract not only future clients but will be a significant marketing tool helping us to further spread the word.

Thank you, Henry!

Fundraising success in 2022

“Having fun fundraising” is one thing but if that fun can be accompanied with a successful campaign which achieves its objectives that is another! Our autumn campaign included bucket collections at Waitrose and Lidl plus our Winter Raffle which was drawn at The Boat House in the run-up to Christmas. Thanks to all our great volunteer collectors and the generosity of friends, families and public for dipping their hands into their pockets - we raised a magnificent £2300 beating our £2000 target. Sincere thanks to Waitrose and Lidl as well as the donors of the many raffle prizes - congratulations, of course, to the winners!

One footnote – a further benefit of the bucket collections is the awareness it generates and the potential of recruiting volunteers and future clients. We landed a coup at the Lidl collection with an offer by a young lady, a singer, to stage a fundraising gig for us! She was especially interested in our club as she has a disabled brother who is dead keen on boats. Let's see what transpires!

Booking Your Voyage

If you are disabled or have mobility issues or know someone who has why not jump on board and book a voyage on our Wheelyboat WOW-one. We know you will not be disappointed – apart from maybe the weather! We have a lovely boat, safe as houses, with a capacity of 8 people including up to two wheelchair users.

The booking process couldn't be easier – simply follow your preferred option below:

Website: www.wabc.org.uk/bookavoyage

Send us a message on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/wallingfordaccessibleboatclub

Email: enquiries@wabc.org.uk

Hope we will see you out on the water!

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