



### 2011 - A Bumper Year For The B&MK

The Bicentennial Conference held in November last year marked the end of a remarkable year of achievements for the B&MK. These included:

- The announcement that the first stretch of waterway would be built as part of the Marston Vale Innovation Park.
- The Launch of the Trust’s Community Boat appeal, which has already passed the half way stage in fund raising and now stands at over £56,000.
- Winning the ‘Outstanding Achievement’ prize in the Waterways Trust Annual awards.
- Seeing B&MK membership reaching its highest level yet.
- Holding a highly successful Bicentenary Conference.
- Giving a record number of talks (see page 3).
- Recognition of the Waterway as a major element in the Bedford Waterspace Study (see page 6).

Commenting at the conference, Trust’s Chair, Graham Mabbutt said “It’s been a privilege for me to take over as Chair during such a successful year. Our achievements are entirely due to the support, dedication, and commitment of our members and the many partners that have worked with us throughout the year”.



**The Bicentenary Dinner in full swing**



## View From The Chair

May I wish all the Members and Supporters of the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust a Very Happy New Year. At the time of writing this column preparations are still under way for Christmas festivities and I hope that you all enjoyed a good Christmas, and like me are looking forward to a successful 2012.

The past few months since you received your last newsletter have seen the Trust going through a busy period. We had a very successful meeting of MK Members and Supporters of the Trust at the Broughton Hotel courtesy of Mark Fitzsimon, the General Manager of the hotel and a generous supporter of the B&MK project. We are holding another session at the hotel on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February from 7.00pm till 9.00pm. It will be an informal report back and question and answer session, with nibbles and drinks available from the bar.

As those of you who were there will know, we had a very well attended second Annual Partnership Conference in November, followed by the Bicentenary Dinner later in the evening at The Barns Hotel Bedford. Many thanks to everyone who assisted at these events, organising the presentations, the displays, the speakers, our sponsors, and auction lot donators, and in particular to Ruth Lutt and Claire Gathard who masterminded the events, and of course to all of you who attended. We raised £1,000 towards our Community Boat Appeal Fund. Next year the conference will be held in Milton Keynes, as we rotate around the three local authority areas of Central Beds (Marston Vale Forest Centre 2010, Bedford 2011 and MK 2012. The date for your diary in 2012 is Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> November. Venue to be announced.

We continue to meet with influential people to promote the cause of the waterway, and along with colleague trustees I have recently met with the Lord Lieutenant - Sir Samuel Whitbread, the Duke of Bedford, and Pete Winkleman (Chairman of MK Dons). We were also able to showcase the potential of the new waterway thanks to James Griffin for providing the boat and crew for our VIP Trips along the Grand Union Canal.

The B&MK Waterway Consortium met in late November to look at ways of moving the construction of the waterway ahead, and the two Consortium Steering Groups (Bedford & Marston Vale and Milton Keynes) are also meeting to discuss in particular how to progress the developments at either end of the waterway, as well as developments along the route. We intend to hold further meetings with developers.

Please remember the Board Meetings of the B&MK Waterway Trust are open for members to attend. There will be an opportunity for mem-

bers to ask questions, or put forward suggestions. If you would be interested in attending a Board Meeting, please contact Ruth Lutt via our Project Office, who will advise you of the dates of forthcoming meetings.

Finally, please do take a look at the calendar of events published in this newsletter. 2012 will be another busy year for the Trust.

**Graham Mabbutt**



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**B&MK News**

Published by the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust.

Editor.....Geoff Wheeler  
 Proof Readers.....Don & Jill Allison  
 Photo enhancement....Keith Malone  
 Distribution.....Leigh Willows  
 Printed by .....Murrays

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## Record Number Of Talks Last Year



Speakers from the Trust began giving talks to interested groups in 2001. The talks continue but the speakers have changed over the years. The present excellent and dedicated team consists of David Fowler, Hilary Goldsmith, Roger Crews and one of the original team, Paul Leech. Besides providing a steady income for the Trust, the team presents the latest information on the development of the waterway, gaining much support for the project.

Since 2001, 169 talks have been given to more than 5000 listeners. A record 17 talks were given last year and already, 8 are booked for 2012.

### Meet The Talks Team



#### ROGER CREWS

Roger is a semi-retired management trainer and businessman. He is an enthusiastic leader of the Boat Specification Group.



#### PAUL LEECH

Paul is a professional civil engineer with nearly 50 years experience in the railway industry. A canal enthusiast for 30 years and a narrowboat owner for the last 22 years.



#### DAVID FOWLER

David is a Director of the B&MK Trust and has been involved in the Waterway since the beginning. He is a retired construction project manager, a Bedford Tour Guide and a local historian.



#### HILARY GOLDSMITH

Hilary is a Management Consultant who runs her own consultancy business, working with large organisations. She is a Director of the B&MK Waterway Trust.

Give your group an enjoyable and informative session by applying for a talk, 'A Waterway for All'

Contact :

John & Sally Gunning (Talks organisers)

Tel: 01234 305925

email: [talks@b-mkwaterway.co.uk](mailto:talks@b-mkwaterway.co.uk)

### The B&MK Waterway Consortium

The Trust is one of 9 organisations that make up the Consortium responsible for taking the waterway project forward:

Bedford Borough Council  
Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust  
British Waterways  
Central Bedfordshire Council  
Environment Agency  
Marston Vale Trust  
Milton Keynes Council  
Milton Keynes Parks Trust  
Milton Keynes Partnership

The Consortium meets twice a year through two steering groups which cover Milton Keynes and Central Bedfordshire/Bedford sections of the route.

### More news from the

## Photo-Doctor

The Photo-Doctor is not just for image retouching - he is also a qualified photographer specialising in portrait, PR and sport photography.

So whether you need photographs improved or new ones taken, have a look at my web site and get in touch by phone or e-mail.

Web: [www.photo-doctor.co.uk](http://www.photo-doctor.co.uk)  
Tel: 01234 269227 / 07876 56 56 60  
e-mail: [keith@photo-doctor.co.uk](mailto:keith@photo-doctor.co.uk)

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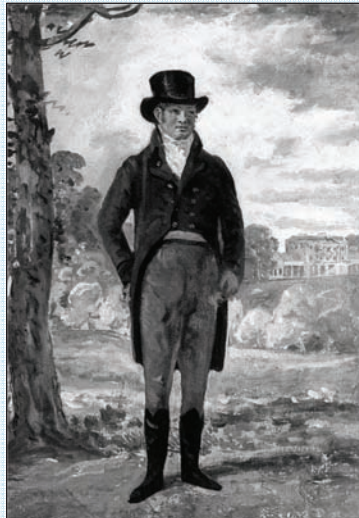
# 200 Years Of The Bedford & Milton Keynes Canal Project

Following the bicentennial celebrations, Sally Gunning provides a fascinating outline of the history of the waterway.



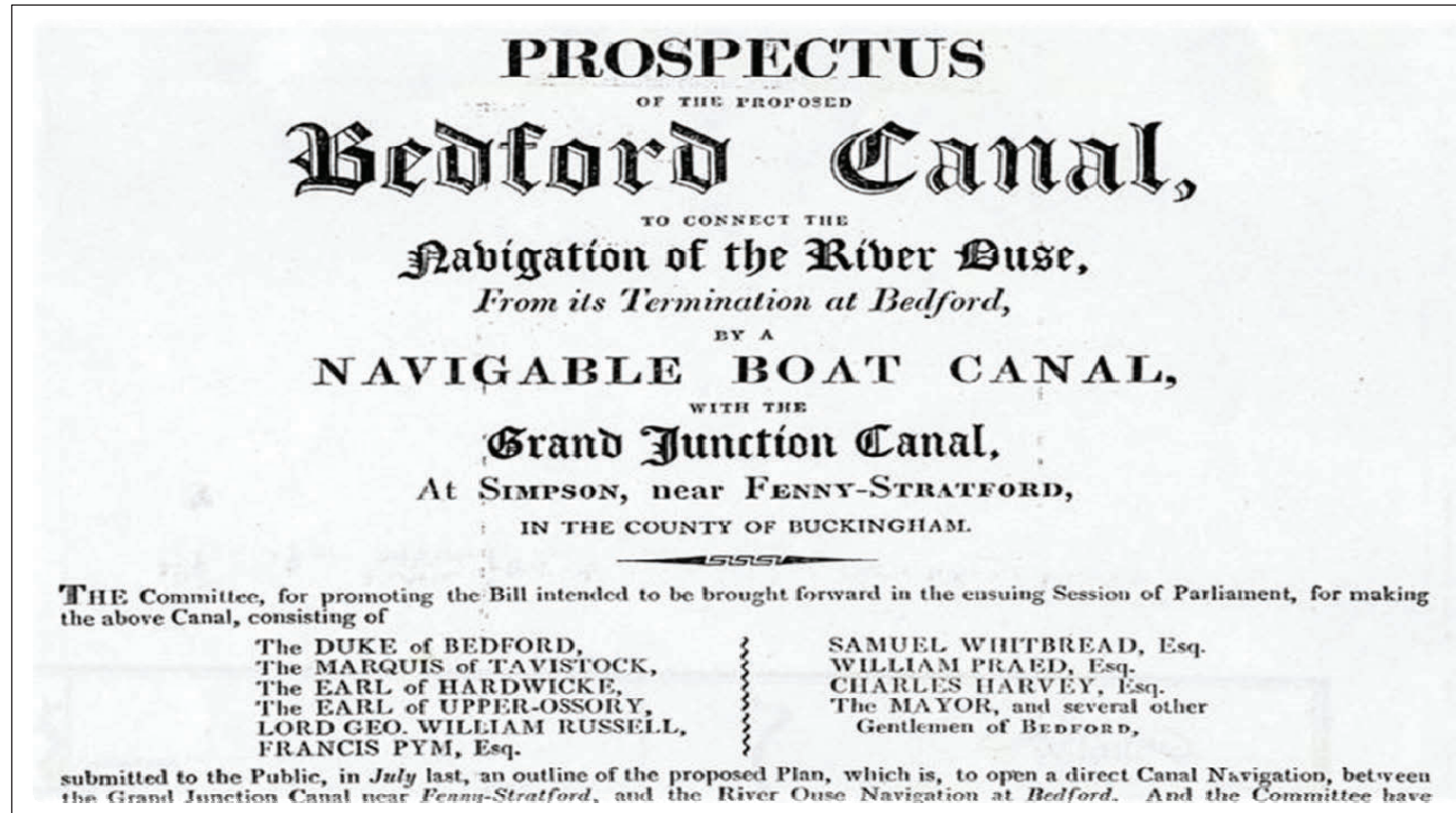
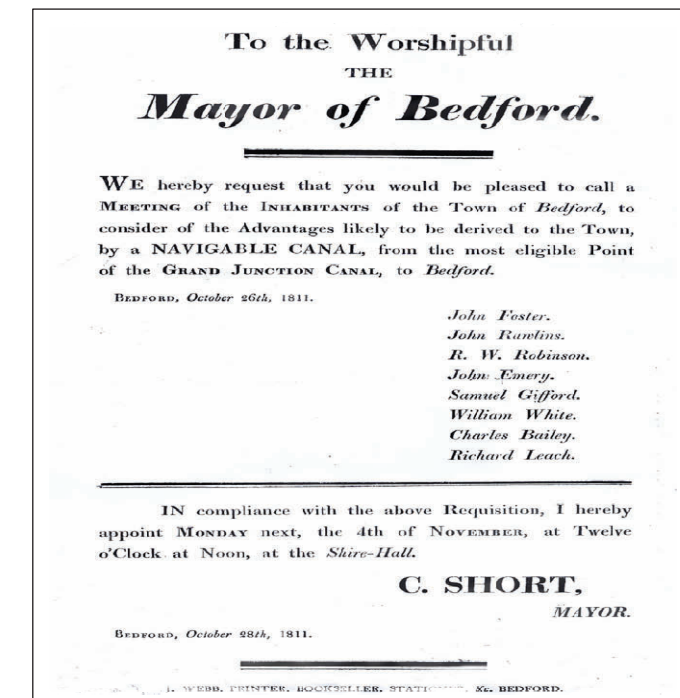
At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bedford was still a relatively small town with a population of less than 4000. In the early years of the new century it grew rapidly. In 1803 an Act of Parliament created a body of men called Improvement Commissioners to pave and light the streets, and to demolish some older buildings to ease congestion. Samuel Whitbread was MP for Bedford. Whitbread was concerned to use his advantages to serve the people of his county.

*"I have no object but the public good."*



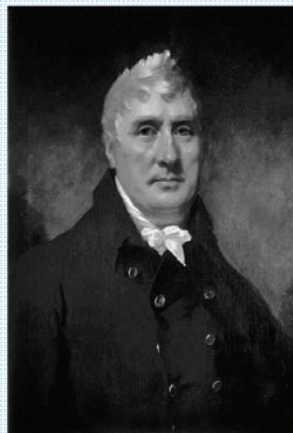
Samuel Whitbread

In the next few years the House of Industry, a prison, and an asylum were built and plans were made to construct a new bridge over the River Great Ouse. All these projects were driven and often financed by Whitbread. The Duke of Bedford and Sam Whitbread both contributed £2000 to the cost of the construction of the new bridge. Lighters laden with coal and other products came up to the wharves in Bedford. The opening of the Grand Junction Canal in the 1790s had an adverse effect on Bedford's trade, with the construction of wharves at Newport Pagnell and Leighton Buzzard, taking business out of Bedford. Traffic in coal decreased by 28% between 1790 and 1820. In 1811 a group of eight businessmen petitioned the Mayor of Bedford requesting that he call a meeting of "the Inhabitants of the Town of Bedford to consider the Advantages likely to be derived to the Town by a NAVIGABLE CANAL from the most eligible point of the Grand Junction Canal to Bedford".



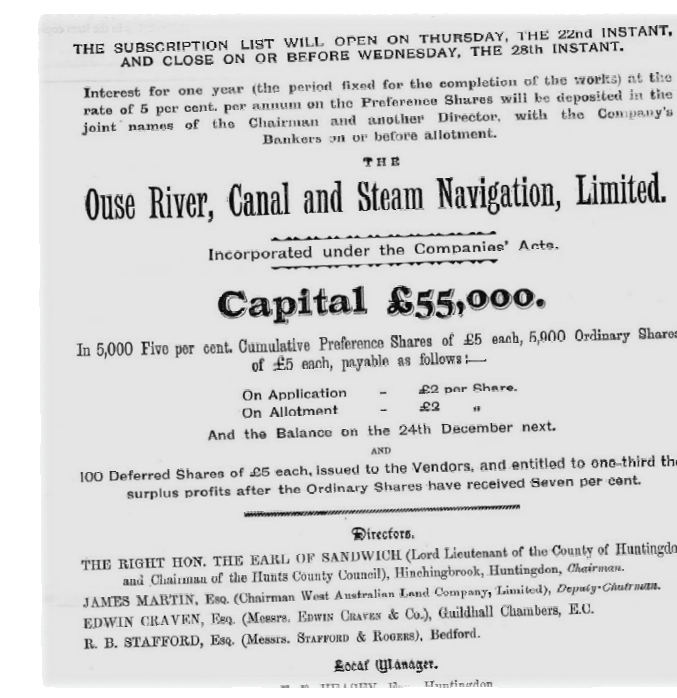
The Mayor, Charles Short, called a meeting for Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November at 12 noon at the Shire Hall. A meeting was held and a prospectus was published. Sam Whitbread and the Duke of Bedford were among the supporters of the scheme. Earlier, Sam Whitbread had been in contact with William Praed, chairman of the Grand Junction Canal Company, who was enthusiastic about the scheme and agreed to fund half of the cost. On 16 July the Committee issued a notice setting out the proposal indicating the line of the canal and emphasising the benefits to the counties of Bedford, Huntingdon and the Fen Country of access to the "populous districts of Birmingham, Manchester & etc."

They commissioned John Rennie, the famous canal engineer, to survey the route with his colleague, Francis Giles. Rennie was well known to the Whitbread family. He had installed a ten horse power steam engine into the Whitbread brewery many years earlier when Samuel first joined the family business, and had been involved in drainage work in the Fens. Rennie was also involved with plans for a canal from Cambridge to the Grand Junction Canal, and had contact with both the Duke of Bedford and Whitbread during this work.



John Rennie

Francis Giles surveyed the route on horseback. In a letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> December Rennie stated that "agreeable to your directions, my surveyor Mr. Francis Giles has examined the country between the town of Bedford and the Grand Junction Canal". He proposed two possible lines for the new canal, one joining the Grand Junction at Woughton and the other at Soulbury. Both lines would follow the same route from Bedford to Brogborough. The costs would be



between £140,000 and £180,000. However, the Soulbury line would need a supply of water, which would mean an additional cost of £20,000 for a reservoir. Four possible sites were proposed.

At the same time a list of landowners who consented or objected to the project was prepared. It was in this list that the name of Henry Hoare first appeared. Henry Hugh Hoare of Wavendon House, a 19<sup>th</sup> century NIMBY, was clearly leading the opposition to the canal. An opposition meeting was held at the White Hart in Ampthill in December 1812. Henry Hoare employed his own engineer, John Holland, to undertake his own survey. Where Rennie had suggested the need for one reservoir Holland had included all four and his estimate was £299,100, over £100,000 more than Rennie's. In the meantime enthusiasm for the canal began to wane. The Duke of Bedford became disillusioned and wrote to Whitbread saying:

*"I wish I could think with you that the measure will be a great public benefit, but I confess my apprehensions are that it will not answer the sanguine expectations of the Projectors at present though I am but a supporter of the measure from the doubts I entertain of its public utility."*

It became clear that the canal project was doomed without the clear financial support of the Grand Junction Company which would not be forthcoming. In early 1815 the creditors were called in and paid off. Other proposals for canals appeared. Then in 1846 came the Bedford to Bletchley railway which followed substantially the route of the 1812-13 canal. The advent of the railway seemed to have sounded the death-knell for further canal development, although in 1891 a company called "The Ouse River, Canal and Steam Navigation Limited" attempted to acquire the navigation rights of the river and to build a canal between the Ouse and the Grand Junction. There were numerous objections to the proposal which also failed.

Nearly 200 years later, in 1994, another radical thinker and Bedford resident, Brian Young, had the idea of getting the canal built as part of the celebration of the new millennium. His aim was for a "Waterway for All" – improving the quality of the local environment and serving the new industries of leisure, tourism and communications – in short reinventing canals for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



Brian Young

Brian founded the Bedford & Milton Keynes Trust as an informal group of volunteers. Since then the Trust has gone from strength to strength and is now run by a consortium with the present Mayor of Bedford as Chairman, and the construction of the first length of the waterway is now in sight.



# Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway At Heart Of New 'WATERSPACE' Studies

- B&MK waterway included as a "strategically significant project"



The economic, environmental and social benefits of developing the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway are constant threads running through the recently published Bedford Waterspace and Economic Impact and Opportunities studies. The Trust's planned community trip boat could provide an "early visible symbol of change".

The studies, which have the full support of the B&MK Waterway Trust, were launched recently by Bedford Borough Council (BBC) and the Environment Agency (EA), who jointly commissioned Richard Glen Associates to carry out the work. This focuses on the corridor of the River Great Ouse from Old Bromham Bridge, downstream to the junction of the proposed B&MK waterway link near Kempston Weir and eastwards through the town centre to Willington Lock.

The BBC and EA are both members of the consortium of local authorities and agencies which was set up just over a year ago to drive forward the B&MK project. Mayor of Bedford Dave Hodgson is its chairman.

The Economic Impact and Opportunities Study (which complements the main study) asserts that the economic impact of the River Great Ouse is estimated at £250,000 per mile per annum. "Bedford as an urban area should be able to considerably exceed this figure with a potential benefit from its stretch of river of £4.5million per annum."

**Key extracts from the Waterspace Study:**  
**The Borough Council will support the creation of the Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway park as a strategic green infrastructure link benefitting the borough as a whole, but particularly important to the delivery of sustainable growth in the northern Marston Vale.**

**Where appropriate, development will be expected to contribute towards the creation and delivery of the waterway.**

**BBC and EA wish to develop the river's economic, environmental and social benefits of water-related recreation in advance of the long-term aspirations of both the B&MK Waterway link and the Fens Waterways link.**

The economic and opportunities study points to the potential for a trip boat. Jane Wolfson, Vice-President of the B&MK Trust, said during the study launch, that the community boat, for which an appeal has been running for five months, could be "a social enterprise milestone" project. "This boat could be one of the most visible symbols of change. It is a 'quick win' idea and we need ideas and suggestions on how to close the £75k funding gap for 2012." (The appeal currently stands at over £56k).

Commenting on the study, Graham Mabbutt, Chairman of the B&MK Waterway Trust, said "This study couldn't have come at a better time in focusing on the huge benefits of water-based regeneration and fits like a glove with the Trust's ultimate aim of creating a 21<sup>st</sup> century 'waterway for all', although it would be unrealistic to ignore that these proposals must compete for resources in a challenging economic climate. That is why the B&MK will be developed in 'bite-size chunks' as resources become available".

Our thanks to Richard Glen Associates, The Environment Agency and Bedford Borough Council for permission to reproduce these extracts and photographs.

## Newsletter Archive

Our office space at the British Waterways building is limited and we have been looking at ways of storing our growing archives. The Bedford and Luton Archives Records Service has offered to ease the burden by hosting our newsletter collection. The online record is complete but we are missing a few hard copies.

Can you help ?

If you have a spare copy of Feb 2007 or Jan 2005 or Summer 2005 or anything before 2004 and you would be willing to donate these to the archive we would love to hear from you. Contact Claire Gathard at  
Claire.gathard@britishwaterways.co.uk or ring 01908 302592

# Events Calendar 2012



Date	Event
Fri 6 Jan	<b>Members' Twelfth Night Social</b> in Bedford - bring a bottle and food to share.
Weds 18 Jan	<b>Projects Group.</b> Join in on the Bedford Community Boat project and our other community projects, or just come along to hear about progress and stay to join us for a drink in the bar afterwards. 6 to 8pm at Box End Park, Kempston MK43 8RQ.
Sun 19 Feb	<b>Willen Winter Weekend Walk</b> followed by a pub lunch overlooking the lake. Meet at 11am in the free car park next to the Grand Union Canal MK9 4AD.
Mon 27 Feb	<b>MK Members Update and Social</b> over drinks and nibbles with informal Q&A. 7-9pm at The Broughton Hotel, MK10 9AA.
Weds 14 Mar	<b>Projects Group</b>
Sun 25 Mar	<b>Bedford's A421 Underpass Circular Walk</b> An easy 4 mile walk, which includes a 2 mile section of the route to the purpose-built A421 underpass in Marston Vale. Meet 11:30am at the Black Horse Pub at Potters Cross, Wootton MK43 9JG.
Tues 24 Apr	<b>Talks and Social Evening for Members &amp; Supporters.</b> See the talks team in action, and meet and mix with your fellow members. £2.50 per head includes tea or coffee and biscuits. 7-9pm at Box End Park, Kempston MK43 8RQ.
Thurs 17 May	<b>B&amp;MK AGM</b> with guest speaker and refreshments to follow. Meet 8pm at the United Reformed Church, Newport Pagnell MK16 8AB.
Tues 22 May	<b>Projects Group</b>
Sat 2 – Tues 5 Jun	<b>Crick Boat Show.</b> Come and help on the B&MK stand or drop by and say hello at the biggest canal show of the year.
Sat 21 – Sun 22 Jul	<b>Bedford River Festival</b> on the Embankment and Mill Meadows. Visit the B&MK at the Waterspace Village to find out more about ideas for improvements in, on and around the river. Bring your boat, or join us for a river trip.
Weds 25 Jul	<b>Projects Group</b>
Sat 28 Jul (tbc)	<b>Linslade Canal Festival.</b> Visit the B&MK display stand at this annual festival with 100s of craft and demonstration stands in Tiddenfoot Waterside Park LU7 2AE.
Sat 1 – Sun 2 Sep	<b>Woodworks.</b> Visit the Trust stand at this weekend festival of wood craft, trees, machines, real ale, arena displays and fantastic folk and roots music at the Forest Centre and Millennium Country Park.
Sun 9 Sep	<b>BBQ &amp; Canal History Talks</b> in Broughton, details to be published nearer the time.
Sat 15 Sep	<b>Ridgmont Ramble</b> as part of Bedfordshire Ramblers Walking festival.
Weds 3 Oct	<b>Projects Group</b>
Fri 2 Nov	<b>3rd Annual Partnership Conference.</b> Join us to hear the latest progress on the route from B&MK Waterway Consortium.
Weds 28 Nov	<b>Projects Group</b>
Dec (tbc)	<b>Xmas Social for Members</b>

Contact Claire in the Trust Project Office on 01908 302592 or [claire.gathard@britishwaterways.co.uk](mailto:claire.gathard@britishwaterways.co.uk) to register or to find out more about any of the above events. Or visit the B&MK website's Talks and Walks page at: <http://www.b-mkwaterway.co.uk/talkswalks.html> where we post more information as events get closer.

## Bedford River Festival

Bring your boat to this year's Bedford River Festival July 21-22. As in 2010 we will have our boats lined up near the 'Butterfly Bridge' next to our display stand and with our banners on. It's a great festival with lots of action and you will be helping to promote the B&MK.

Let Don know at [donallison@btinternet.com](mailto:donallison@btinternet.com) or ring 01908 610564



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### **Wey and Arun could lead the Way**

Members of the B&MK Community Boat committee recently visited the Wey and Arun Trust. The team were impressed both by the Trust's environmentally friendly electric boat, 'Wiggonholt', and also by the amount the boat had earned in the last few years.

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](mailto:enquiries@b-mkwaterway.co.uk) or B&MK Waterway Trust, PO Box 3611, Newport Pagnell, MK16 OXN Tel 01908 302592 (mornings)