

Community Projects

2008 Barge Report - 14th June to 11th July

The 2008 Barge trips were another resounding success judging by the smiles and laughter, through to quiet peace and relaxation experienced by our guests.

- [See extracts from 'Thank You' letters below](#)

The success can also be measured by the way in which guests got involved tackling the steering, and working at the Locks and Swing Bridges.



Approximately 320 people benefited from the trips this year, coming from groups such as:

Abingdon Kingfisher School
 Abingdon / Sutton Courtenay Family Centre
 Abingdon Disabled Work Group
 Abingdon PHAB
 Abingdon Stroke Club
 Douglas House
 Helen House
 Home Farm Trust
 John Masefield Day Centre
 John Masefield Residential
 Mabel Prichard School
 Mencap 7 O'Clock Club
 Mind in Abingdon
 Priors Court School
 Sailability, Oxford
 South & Vale Carers
 Wantage Day Centre

We set off, on the 14th June, from the Bruce Trust Wharf at Great Bedwyn, full of excitement and expectation, onboard the Hannah, which is owned by [The Bruce Trust](#).



The Hannah is fitted with a "joy stick" steering facility, which our Rotary Club financed a few years ago, to enable those who are not strong enough to use the tiller to steer the Barge. It is also fully equipped for wheelchair users.

27 different groups experienced the fun and challenge of the locks, swing bridges and steering, while enjoying the relaxing pace of the barge and beauty of the countryside. Unfortunately one group had to cancel, at short notice, due to staffing problems.

The weather was mostly dry but we had two exceptionally wet days but that did nothing to dampen the spirits of our guests who carried on regardless.

Our guest groups ranged from profoundly disabled children to disadvantaged children through to elderly disabled with their carers, helpers, family members or friends.



One group of children, and their carers, stayed overnight on the Barge which they tell us was exciting and thoroughly enjoyed.



Over the four weeks we cover around 233 miles, opening and closing 1000 lock gates and swing bridges.

Rotarians, their family and friends contributed over 1,100 man and women hours to ensure the safe and friendly passage of the barge.

Some are retired but many took part of their annual leave or gave up their weekends to help out.

Such is the joy that we get out of it, the wise ones plan and volunteer early to again experience the challenge and satisfaction of helping others.



Finally a big Thank You from us.

We are most grateful to our 2008 Sponsors, without whose help we could not finance the trips:

- The Coventry Building Society
- Achilles Information Ltd
- BrookStreet des Roches LLP
- The Pier (Retail) Limited
- Belfor Relectronic (UK) Ltd

Extracts from a few of the many 'Thank You' letters

Ross, a student at Kingfisher School

"Thank you for steering the Barge. We had a good day. I liked steering the boat and opening the locks. The only thing missing was my fishing rod.

Thank you again"

Douglas House

"We all had a wonderful time with you; enhanced by the individual friendliness and enthusiasm from the team of volunteers.

We are grateful to you all for the time and effort you put into making the day so enjoyable for everyone - going the extra mile in entertaining and interacting with our guests so they could join in."

Mabel Prichard School

"None of the children had been on a barge before and they had been becoming more and more excited as the big day drew near.

Your colleagues on the crew from Captain Richard down to 'lowly assistant apprentice' Mike really made our day and everybody went to a lot of trouble to ensure all the children had a hands-on experience with the locks, swing bridges and steering the boat etc."

Phab

"May we all thank the 'skipper' Alan and crew (Stephen, Helen and Chris) who made it another memorable day. The members who steered 'Hannah' with the tiller or using the remote control joystick all talked about how enjoyable it was, and how well they managed, without too many brushes with the bank or trees. Again Ken was to be 'mentioned in dispatches', the skipper said he was impressed how well Ken steered through the Locks/Tunnels, he seems a natural. (He swears each time he has never done such a thing before, except last year).

Everyone asked me to thank you all, we all got a chance to make some contribution to the day, either working the locks, or steering the vessel, or simply enjoying the relaxing trip. We all enjoyed ourselves so much we all ignored the short rain showers during the trip."

Leonard Cheshire Disability

"I would like to say a very big thank you to Andrew and the crew for a most enjoyable day on Tuesday the 1st July.

The residents and carers all had a great time; nothing was too much trouble for the crew. We were very lucky with the weather and everyone said they enjoyed the peaceful surroundings.

Thank you once again, the barge trip is something we look forward to each year, we are always made to feel so welcome. We are looking forward to next year's trip already."