Wallingford Accessible Boat Club

Wheels On Water

ISSUE 9
AUTUMN 2025

The WABC newsletter

www.wabc.org.uk





Wallingford Accessible Boat Club smashes all records!

What an amazing year of boating we have had!

The performance statistics for the 2025 season, just published, show that we have broken all previous records with the all-important passenger count up 18% at just under 500 with the number of wheelyboat trips up 8%, to just under 100. Amazing!

What a tremendous achievement by our wonderful team of volunteers who have worked tirelessly throughout the season undertaking eight or nine voyages over a six-day week.

And what makes their achievement all the more amazing, halfway into the season we completed the move of our operating base at Benson to our new facilities at Riverside, central Wallingford.







This required a great deal of retraining in parallel with "business as usual" continuing at Benson. What a team.

The increasing popularity of the WABC service bodes well for the future and endorses our vision of growth to enable more disabled and less mobile people in Oxfordshire to get out and about on the river – just like able-bodied people do.

We are recruiting... Would you like to volunteer?

We are looking for more volunteers to join our brilliant 50-strong team of river lovers. Here are just three.

We need more skippers and crew members to cope with the growing popularity of the WABC service, and if you can help with marketing and fundraising that would be fantastic. Full training to RYA standards provided.

So if you want to have fun on the river with new friends, and help others do the same, email **john.jenkins@wabc.org.uk**



Printing courtesy of NP Design &Print

What some of our passengers say

After every WOW-one voyage, we ask passengers for their feedback. Here are a few of their responses...

> Everything on our trip was perfect. The volunteers had a wealth of knowledge about Wallingford and all the interesting places we passed on our journey down the Thames. The boat was so comfortable and quiet and the weather was perfect

> Thank you for a lovely day out. Our members really enjoyed the trip and we will definitely be back

> The boat crew were friendly and explained everything. All abilities were comfortable and engaged with the trip. The boat driver was flexible about our change of route plans. The weather was great so overall everything was as we had hoped for. Thank you!

> A five-star experience, from start to finish. Made to feel very comfortable and safe, the volunteers really made our trip enjoyable. Thank you



For all disabled or elderly people out there...
If you are yet to voyage with us, do get in touch and spoil yourself.

You will not regret it!

WABC moves to Riverside

Four years of searching then another four years of development but, at last, WABC's new permanent home has become a reality with a very successful opening event! And what a day it was!

A day to savour indeed. Thursday, 15th May, 2025 will live in WABC's history book for all time. And the plaque marking the event on one of the brick walls of the accessible ramp is there to remind us, if ever that becomes necessary.



About 40 or so of the "great and the good" – Wallingford's Mayor, Cllr Ros Lester, representatives of Oxfordshire Lieutenancy, District & local Cllrs, and friends and supporters heard opening addresses by SODC Councillor Sam Lawrie-Evans and WABC's Chairman, John Jenkins MBE who then cut the symbolic ribbon, declaring the Accessible Pontoon well and truly open. What a moment for all to witness!

And why is the Riverside facility important?

In 2017 we started our search for a permanent operating base, with sufficient parking, toilet facilities, a small hut to accommodate the necessities of a voyage, access to the river, a slipway or similar and mooring space for our precious wheelyboat, WOW-one. Apart from the mooring space, that's what SODC's £209k development has delivered – and we are very grateful to the District Council for its investment.

The facility makes the whole operation of wheelyboat management easier, for our passengers and our volunteers. But that's not all, Riverside's position opens up so much more of the river for us – not only can we easily voyage upstream to Benson but also downstream, giving our passengers a more enjoyable cruise with greater variety of wildlife and open countryside to savour.

We started "live" operations of the accessible pontoon on 21st July having developed a new set of operating procedures and completed training for our crews, and to-date our passengers' feedback is a "big thumbs up"! Sure, we've had some teething problems along the way but these are behind us now and we can all look forward to many seasons of happy boating from 'home-sweet-home'!

John Jenkins MBE

Printing courtesy of NP Design &Print

Fundraising

We are very grateful to all our supporters for their great help raising funds for us. £20,000, being our fundraising target for this year, takes a lot of raising on one's own but of course "many hands make light work" – or at least lighter work. So, thank you to everybody out there who has dug deep for WABC – for their donations, for their bucket shaking, for getting involved in our raffle, for their sponsorship and for their efforts and creativity staging an event for us. We couldn't manage without you.





Thanks for your sounds of music

Thank you to the Oxford Radcliffe Orchestra and their wonderful Concert staged in late March. What a wonderful sound they created in the splendour of the Radcliffe Concert Hall. Thank you for a wonderful donation and an evening never to be forgotten.

Thank you to the Thameside Choir and their fun concert held of the benefit of WABC at the Wallingford Baptist Church in June. Another lovely evening.

Thank you to the Didcot Community Gospel Choir who sang gloriously for us in Wallingford's St Mary's Church in July. What a special treat that was.





What a summer of fun!

2025 will be remembered for the fine sunny weather and the joy it enabled our passengers to enjoy as they soaked up the sun. A warm sunny day and a trip on the river - what could be better!

Meanwhile, the WABC team had a great day out at the Wallingford Carnival and we even won an award – the much sought-after Community Cup. Just look at this! All helps "spreading the word"!

Pictures paint a thousand words...













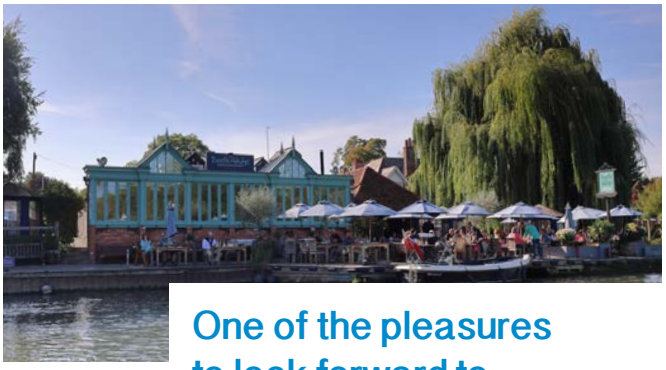




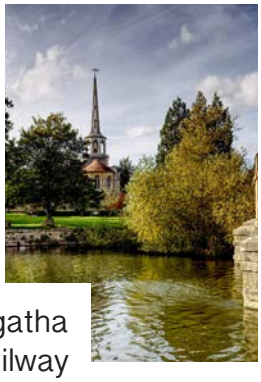
Our most senior helm?



Last year we featured our most junior helm, three-year-old Florence O'Donnell at the wheel, complete with her Skippers cap, looking as pleased as punch. Now it's our pleasure to feature our most senior skipper (so far), at the other end of the age spectrum, almost 100 years between them. Welcome 102-year-old Len Dalton who competently helmed WOW-one recently. Holding a steady course, Len said, "I never thought I would be back on the river". Glad to help, Len!







One of the pleasures to look forward to... The Moulsford Run





One of the many benefits of our Riverside operation is the easy access we now have to the Thames reach downstream of Wallingford – to Moulsford and beyond, down to Cleeve Lock. It offers a wide variety of scenery, bird-life and tourist attractions, such Agatha Christie's boathouse, the railway bridge built by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the world famous civil and mechanical engineer, and the well-known Beetle & Wedge restaurant – great views, lovely countryside.

Here are a few photos snapped by our roving reporter, Chris – just a glimpse of some of the pleasures that await our 2026 passengers.







To all our friends...

And thanks to Wallingford Town Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and the Oxford Community Foundation for all their help with the all-important grants. These teams enable our survival!

Thank you too, Wallingford Bridge Estate charity, for support of some of our administration costs.

Thank you Waitrose for hosting our bucket collection in May and also to Lidl for our day there in October. You are so good to us.

Be lucky in our Christmas Draw!

Fantastic prizes to be won. £10 for a book of 10 tickets. Email **john.jenkins@wabc.org.uk** for more info and to get tickets.

Get in touch!

If you have any comments about this issue of our newsletter or want to get in touch to learn more about Wallingford Accessible Boat Club, please contact the Editor, John Jenkins MBE.

Email **john.jenkins@wabc.org.uk** or visit our website: **www.wabc.org.uk**

Wanted for 2026, please!

Any individual (or organisation) who will be prepared to run an event for the benefit of WABC. You could be our next Community Champion! Email john.jenkins@wabc.org.uk for more information.

A huge thanks to all our sponsors!

We are very grateful for the support of our Sponsors whose financial help adds great stability to our operation. Life would be much harder without them – so a very big Thank You from all of us.

Driving Miss Daisy® We're There For You

CHAMPION & CO. ESTABLISHED 1869

INSTAVOLT

W WINTERBROOK

Pettits of Wallingford

np design & print ltd www.npdesignprint.co.uk

Printing courtesy of NP Design &Print