

## NEWS LETTER – Summer 2016

In the Spring newsletter I mentioned something about moving house, well we finally got everything moved over in mid June when Hanna's Dad kindly stood in for John for a weeks cruising on the Caldon Canal so he could come back and haul furniture!

The Season has gone very well so far and despite being left a crew member down at the start of cruise 3, we have had plenty of help from Hanna's Dad and handy lockwheeling guests along the way to keep things running smoothly. They were joined by Michaela in Liverpool who seems to be enjoying the challenges so far.

### Big News

Those of you that have already had your cruise this year may have noticed Hanna's expanding waistline. We are very pleased to announce that at the end of November we will be joined by the newest member of the Bywater family. All this end are very excited, including Alex who is looking forward to being a big brother, having turned 5 in April (where does the time go?!)

### Late Availability

Bookings for 2016 were outstanding and despite a slow start, March saw a flurry of bookings and we were fully booked before the first guests arrived in Banbury. This means we have no late availability as such but there is always a possibility of cancellations so if you could be flexible and don't mind jumping into a space that becomes available last minute, then do let me know. It's always nice when I can fill a cancelled cabin and refund the disappointed guest most of their money.

### Crew

The wonderful Debbie is leaving us on the 30<sup>th</sup> August and I know many of you will join us in wishing her all the best with her year at College and university beyond. We have tried to persuade her that a life afloat would be much more exciting than one as an Occupational Therapist but she seems quite set on the idea. What will we do without her you may ask? Well at the start of this season we were joined by Keira, who has been learning the ropes and will be stepping into the breach and taking over responsibility for the galley. We have no doubts she will be fine, given the excellent on-the-job training she has received from Debs herself, and her previous experience as a Ski Chalet host for two winters. Ellie, crew girl from 2015 has finally got back from cycling around India for the last 5 months and will be joining us on the 30<sup>th</sup> August to take up the reins as crew so we shan't be short-handed.

## Season 2017

We know many of you are keen to get something in the diary for next year before it fills up. We do have a prospective buyer for the business but negotiations have been complex and we are yet to come to terms so we are not yet in a position to announce them. With this in mind we have decided to release a provisional schedule, and will begin taking bookings, however we ask that you DO NOT send any deposits until we can confirm the exact plans for 2017 and whether the season will be operated by us or a new owner. The buyer has seen the schedule as attached and is happy with it so we anticipate any changes to be minimal in the event of a transfer of the business. We will also be providing full training and handover if and when the time comes to help them continue to operate the boats in the successful vein that we have. This is not ideal, but we hope you'll understand and we will, of course be in touch as soon as we have any firm news on the sale. With no payment of deposit you will not be under any obligation to confirm your booking until such time as we confirm details. You shall hear from us whatever happens, by November.

As you will see we have gone back to some old favourites and intend to spend time exploring the beautiful and less busy waterways of The North. We will be paying Coventry a visit for the first time before travelling up to a favourite location of Stoke. Chester has lured us back after an absence of several years and canal enthusiasts may be pleased to see the inclusion of The Ellesmere Port Canal Museum. The lovely Llangollen features early to avoid the crowds and make the most of the Spring sunshine with a visit to the Montgomery on the way back down. Liverpool was left off an original outline, but following a lovely visit to this spectacular location just last week we have been persuaded to go back. We are excited to return to the fond familiarity of The Penines and The Rochdale Canal. Whaley Bridge to Stoke is just lovely from start to finish with the Caldon Canal being the obvious highlight. Last years route to Nottingham via The Erewash proved successful so we will be repeating this before meandering back down The River Soar to reach the awesome Foxton Staircase Locks. A detour via the popular canal hub of Stoke Bruerne brings us back to Warwick, and the favourite waterways of Warwickshire and Worcestershire with all their locks, features and tunnels. The Severn & Avon are featured for the first time after a successful but unexpected detour this year and The Stratford Canal never fails to shine. The circular from Banbury at the end should round this season off nicely.

New for the 2017 are our first ever 10 night cruises. The Rochdale Canal is not to be rushed and given the problems with water supply in this area it's prudent to ensure we have enough time to reach our destination. Squeezing a cruise to Whaley Bridge into 9 nights simply wasn't sensible. We have also decided that the Warwick ring, which has been very popular in the past needs an additional day to ensure reasonable length cruising days for the crew as much as anyone else. As the canals gain in popularity and the number of boats rise, the amount of ground we can cover in a 6 hour cruising day, particularly on sections where there are locks, has reduced, and there are only so many 6pm finishes the crew will forgive us for and happy crew, hopefully means happy holidays!

All the best of boatiness,

*Hanna, John, Alex, bump and crew*