



Welcome to this annual report and review of the Canal Boat Project. The year was marked by many achievements and milestones, but perhaps most significant was the retirement of our founding chair Derek Fenny whose vision, drive and dedication over 18 years has brought the charity to where it is today.

Although founded in 1991, this year (2008/9) was only the 10th year of operation for the Canal Boat Project - delivering our objective of providing boating activities for community groups and individuals who, because of disability or disadvantage, would not otherwise achieve the benefits such activities bring.

Our first boat *Stort Challenger*, was launched in May 1999 after 8 years of planning and fund raising. The years since then have seen the operation grow to a fleet of four boats delivering both days trips and holiday/short break boat accommodation to around 3000 users each year.

Our users include people with all types and degrees of disability and central to the charity's objectives is the encouragement and involvement of our users in the operation of the boat during their trip. This has enabled, for example, those with mobility limitations to operate locks and with sight impairment to steer the boat.

2008 marked the start of a comprehensive 5 year action plan which followed a wide ranging review of the charity's operation and potential. It includes:-

- * The upgrading and maintenance of the fleet of boats to ensure our users enjoy the latest facilities;
- * The separation of the day trip and holiday operations with the holidays and short breaks being marketed as "Lock View Canal Holidays." This has enabled greater focus on the different requirements of each type of trip;
- * The opening of the new operational base and reception at our Burnt Mill mooring which has improved the operational efficiency and administration;
- * The continued recruitment and training of volunteers to help with all aspects of the operation;
- * Improvements to the financial security of the charity and greater use of computer systems and websites; and
- * Development of a marketing strategy and action plan to ensure potential users are aware of who we are and what we do.

Reports on the progress in these and other areas follow this introduction. None of this progress would have been achieved however without the dedication, enthusiasm and skill of our staff and large team of volunteers. I wish to record the thanks of the Trustees and indeed our users to them all. Particular thanks go to Doreen Goodall, our General Manager for her advice, professionalism, and hard work in steering the charity to the success we achieved during a sometimes difficult year.

Geoff Hill
Chairman

Day trips remain the most popular service we provide and we delivered just over 300 trips last year. This means that approximately 3000 people enjoyed a boating experience which they would not otherwise have done.

Our users are mostly community groups including disability support groups such as Mind, Parkinson's Disease Society, local care homes and hospices, Rotary and luncheon clubs, school groups and even a gardening club.

In the last year however, there has been greater use by family and friends groups. They come to celebrate a variety of events including children's birthdays, a 102nd birthday, re-union or just a good day out. One family used the opportunity to help a father re-experience forgotten pleasures as he was an ex-boater whose boating days had been cut short by illness.

Particularly pleasing last year was the move to longer trips. The number of 6 hour trips increase by 42% and all day trips taken almost doubled.

The typical trip starts at 10.00am where the group are welcomed aboard by the fully trained and experienced volunteer crew. After a brief introduction and safety talk we cast off and head in the direction chosen by the group. A four hour trip will cover around 5 miles and travel through at least four locks. At each lock the group are invited to 'lend a hand' opening gates, raising paddles or holding ropes or they can sit and watch the activity often shouting encouraging remarks ("Come on put your back into it!!"). The crew are happy to give a full explanation of how the lock works.

There are a number of options for lunch which range from a simple packed lunch through more elaborate buffet and some groups have used the galley facilities to produce a full cooked meal. Alternatively groups may elect to lunch at one of the riverside (or almost riverside) pubs.

The return trip provides more opportunity to share the boat operations including having a go at steering the boat (under close supervision of the skipper of course).

We operate throughout the year and increasingly popular last year were our Christmas cruises. The boats are decorated with a Christmas tree, lights and other decorations and the atmosphere is completed with Christmas music. Leaving the Burnt Mill mooring at 10.30 we travel upstream arriving at Harlow Mill at 12.00noon. The group then has the option of self catering or taking advantage of the 2 course Christmas lunch provided by the Harlow Mill Restaurant. We then return by boat arriving back at Burnt Mill by dusk.

Again this year we supported British Waterways in delivering two School Science Weeks for year 5 and 6 students. A classroom session by the BW Education Officer is followed by 2 hours on the boats where all students experience the boat operation and receive a certificate confirming their participation.

So our two trip boats are kept busy throughout the year and the services of the volunteer crews are important and greatly appreciated in providing an enjoyable and memorable trip.

Key Facts

312 daytrips completed

6% increase on previous year

Around 3000 passengers carried

Over 2000 locks successfully negotiated

6-hour trips up by 42%

Winter trips up by 235%

Our 5-year strategic plan included the full refurbishment and upgrading of our holiday boats which now operate under the brand “Lock View Canal Boat Holidays”. The separation of holiday boats from day trips has allowed us to concentrate on providing the facilities specific to this use.

The winter of 2007/8 saw both boats being repainted in bright new livery and the largest boat, *Red Watch*, underwent a full refit to provide new furnishings and fabrics, a revised layout to create a comfortable lounge area at the bow, complete new galley and energy efficient lighting. Mechanically, a new engine was also installed. Feedback from those who used her during the following season has been extremely positive and complimentary.

Those users are coming from an increasingly wide area which even included last year a family from Denmark who found out about us through the website. Others included a school group from Devon of children with disabilities, several scout and guide groups and a family with two young boys – one a wheelchair user – whose post holiday feedback included a comment from the boys who described their week as “better than EuroDisney!”

We encourage our holiday users to self-steer and provide an option of training dependant on previous experience. The start of trip familiarisation was improved last year to provide support and instruction by a qualified skipper during the first 2 hours of the holiday trip. For the complete novice we offer the opportunity to attend a training session before the holiday starts.

We offer hire periods from full weeks down to overnight short breaks. These overnight breaks are becoming increasingly popular with residents of care homes who use our specialist facilities to experience an overnight stay on a boat. We provide a volunteer crew for their first day to deliver a cruise along the river. The boat then returns to the security of our mooring where the group spend the night, often using the facilities of the adjacent restaurant for their evening meal. The next morning is then spent at leisure, breakfasting and packing to clear the boat at noon.

Bookings for holiday and short breaks are growing but were clearly affected by the “credit crunch” during the year. Forty-five groups and families took a holiday or short break last year compared to 52 the previous year. Bookings for the coming year however have shown significant increase during the first four months as holidaymakers turn to the UK and realise the exceptional value of a Lock View holiday, with prices being held at 2008 rates.

Full details of our holidays and short breaks are on the website www.lockviewholidays.org.uk.

Key Facts

154 days holiday taken

45 holiday bookings

Holiday boats repainted

Red Watch refurbished

Funding secured to refurbish

Stort Challenger

Our first overseas booking

“We were very relieved to have the expertise of your crew to keep us on the straight and narrow especially in the upper reaches of the Stort!”

The Canal Boat Project is an Accredited Training Centre for the National Community Boats Association. We are therefore able to offer training and assessment leading to NCBA qualifications and certification, not only for our own volunteers, but also to outside organisations and individuals. These qualifications include Complete Crew Certificate, Certificate in Community Boat Management (CCBM – a skipper's qualification), Tidal Waters Endorsement for CCBM and Managing Training.

In September 2008 the Maritime & Coastguard Agency introduced a requirement that skippers of boats taking small groups should have a formal qualification such as CCBM. This led to increased demand earlier in that year from outside organisations for this assessment. (The Canal Boat Project has always required its skippers to hold this qualification). This increased demand and the increase in our own volunteer numbers, placed significant additional requirements for the provision of training. This had been anticipated and in order to meet those demands we invested time and resource to increase the number of qualified trainers. This year saw an additional 5 trainers qualify bringing the total to eight.

Training inevitably takes place on a boat and there was also the need to plan for the additional courses to ensure the relevant boats were available. With a minimum of 10 training events each month this required careful planning.

The results for the year are impressive. 25 of our volunteers and 38 other individuals gained the crew qualification. 10 of our volunteers and 9 others gained their CCBM and 4 achieved the Tidal Endorsement. As mentioned previously, 5 volunteers gained their trainers qualification.

The Training Group also organise and deliver other training required by the Canal Boat Project to ensure our staff and volunteers develop and maintain the skills to help them fulfil their roles. These include training to enable safe supervision of novice steerers which is completed by all our skippers. Experienced skippers can also undertake training to help others develop boat handling skills. We have developed First Aid training for skippers and crew which is relevant to the situations they are likely to encounter and this year we are developing training in Equality and Diversity to ensure we meet current and future requirements and best practice in this field.

The Training Group also organise a mandatory update day for all skippers and crew which includes new information and refreshers on safety systems. This year the theme was dealing with 'man overboard' situations which included several practical exercises. The days were held during January and February – not the kindest time to have volunteers jumping overboard and indeed the first day had to be cancelled as the river was frozen solid! It should be noted that the man overboard volunteers were genuine (but training) volunteers who were fully equipped with dry suits and supplied with copious cups of hot tea and coffee. The days were judged by all as very useful and enjoyable and the format will be continued into future update days.

Plans for the future include the delivery of a boat handling course which leads to a formal qualification recently introduced by NCBA. This follows several requests from outside individuals who want to learn how to manage a boat safely but do not require the full CCBM qualification.

Details of all courses offered by The Canal Boat Project are available on the website www.canalboat.org.uk

Key Facts

5 new trainers qualified

63 crew trained

19 skippers trained

First aid training now offered

All crew completed Man

Overboard training

The Canal Boat Project is very reliant on volunteers to achieve its objectives. With only 5 paid staff, all working very hard but part time, the majority of the workload is undertaken by our volunteers. 2008 saw the recruitment of 24 new volunteers. As with the rest of our volunteer force, they were from a variety of backgrounds, ages and experience but all with a common desire to deliver boating pleasure and new experiences for our users.

We currently have 133 active volunteers performing a variety of tasks. The majority provide skipper and crew duties for our day trip operations and we have 33 qualified skippers and 55 trained crew. This may seem a lot but we delivered over 300 trips during the year each requiring a skipper and two crew.

The boats need ongoing maintenance and a growing band of volunteers employ their DIY skills to achieve some quite remarkable results. No job seems to be beyond them, though we leave the more technical and specialised to our professional contractors.

Routine cleaning and maintenance is achieved by our turnaround team, who deliver consistently high standards frequently commented on by our users

Volunteer input does not stop there. An active Health & Safety group has completed risk assessments for all areas of our operation and, this year, has implemented a more clearly defined life jacket policy and no smoking policy for the safety and comfort of users and volunteers.

As with most charities, funding is an ongoing challenge and a small but active funding group has successfully achieved almost £30,000 of grants this year and many smaller fundraising activities to further the work of the charity. They now face the major challenge to obtain funding for a new boat to replace one of the current holiday boats in 5 years time.

The marketing group has seen some particular successes. Thanks to the support of voluntary service councils and other infrastructure bodies throughout Essex, Hertfordshire and parts of London, we have been able to provide information about our work to thousands of charities and community groups who are now starting to make use of the boats. Our successful application to the Cranfield Trust has enabled us to secure the services of a Consultant to assist us in developing a new Marketing Strategy to guide us through the next five years of our development.

There is no doubt that the new website has had a significant effect in increasing the recruitment of volunteers and in the last 2 years 22 of the 38 new volunteers made first contact through the website. It is however not the only vehicle for recruitment. Volunteers also learn about us from colleagues who are already volunteers with us, from having experienced a trip as a user or carer and of course through the local volunteer centres.

All start by attending an introduction meeting where the origins, aims and objectives of the charity and how those are achieved are all explained. The potential volunteer then has a clear idea of the jobs available and commitment required of them.

Progression then depends on the areas in which they wish to help. All however will include some form of training to ensure they have the necessary skills to carry out their duties safely and effectively. That training is carried out by yet more volunteers whose activities are reported in detail elsewhere.

Key Facts

24 new volunteers recruited

133 active volunteers

33 qualified skippers

55 trained crew

More than 7500 hours of
volunteering

Patron

Anne Wafula Strike

Harlow paralympian Anne was born and grew up in Nairobi, Kenya, and made history in 2004 when she became the first Kenyan woman to compete in a Paralympic Games, reaching the final in the T53 400m in Athens. In 2005 she became a British citizen and has since represented GB at the Paralympic World Cup and Athletics World Championships. In 2006 she was appointed as the first Goodwill Ambassador for international development charity Action on Disability and Development, a charity working in 12 of the poorest countries in Africa and Asia. Anne became our first Patron and is a regular visitor to the Project and advocate for our work.

President

Derek Fenny

Derek was the brains behind the inception of the Project and served as our Chairman until 2008. He now continues to be actively involved as our first President. As Treasurer of Harlow Sports Trust, a Trustee of Harlow Health Centres Trust, Board Member of Harlow Gateway and East Potential, Chairperson of Harlow Foyer and President of Mark Hall and Netteswell Community Association, his network of contacts in Harlow is a priceless resource to us and he continues to work tirelessly on our behalf.

The Trustees

Robert Croft

Robert joined us two years ago, initially in his professional capacity as a Consultant guiding the Trustees through the restructuring of the organisation. His love affair with the waterways started in Birmingham at the age of 15 and he now lives near the river at Little Hallingbury.

Debbie DeVille (Vice Chair)

Debbie joined the Project five years ago as a user on a trip with the Braintree Outdoor Pursuits Club. She now has her own accessible narrowboat at Upton on Severn in Worcestershire. Debbie divides her time between the Project and voluntary work with Mind and at Letchworth Garden House Hospice.

Dave Gibbs (Secretary)

Dave discovered the Project when he brought a group from the Eltham TOC H club for the elderly on a daytrip in 2007. A boating enthusiast for many years, his professional background includes voluntary sector support and management roles and fundraising advisor. Dave commutes to Harlow from his home in Kent.

Maurice Harvey (Treasurer)

Maurice became a Trustee in 2006 and looks after our financial affairs. His wife, who is a member of Ongar Rotary Club, volunteered him for the role, when she heard that we were looking for a finance specialist. In real life, he works for HSBC at their UK head office.

John Hayes

John has been with us for five years, but only one year as a Trustee. He too started as a user with an Epping Forest community group. He was previously a Detachment Office for the British Red Cross. Like several of the Trustees, John is a qualified skipper and can often be found messing about on the river.

Geoff Hill (Chairman)

Geoff attributes his involvement to his wife's role as a volunteer with St Clare Hospice. He joined us in 2004, following early retirement after 36 years as a pharmacist and retail manager. Geoff was the obvious candidate to fill the considerable void as Chairman following the retirement of Derek Fenny last year and has provided stability and balance during challenging times for our organisation.

Alan Jones

Alan joined the Trustees last year and brings considerable local knowledge gleaned from 26 years as a member of Harlow Council, as well as involvement with the Harlow District Sports Trust and Great Parndon Community Association. His working life as a mechanical engineer and tool design draughtsman gives him a unique insight into matters mechanical on the boats.

*The Staff***Doreen Goodall**, Project Manager

Doreen is the glue that holds it all together. She joined us in January 2006 and has worked tirelessly to create the professional organisation we have become today. Her unshakable drive and enthusiasm for the job is a source of constant bemusement to us all. Switching effortlessly from boss, to mother, to life coach to shoulder to cry on, she juggles the daily challenges of her complex role with a subtle balance of compassion and determination.

Tina Keehner and Belinda Plunkett, Part Time Administrators

Tina and Belinda are known collectively as "The Wendys". As their job title suggests, they provide general administrative support in the office, dealing with enquiries from customers, processing bookings, matching volunteers to vacancies and preparing the skipper's packs for every daytrip. Whilst Belinda boasts a share in a 50-foot narrowboat, Tina's only experience of boat ownership appears to be of the inflatable kind!

Richard Witter, Boat Operations Co-ordinator

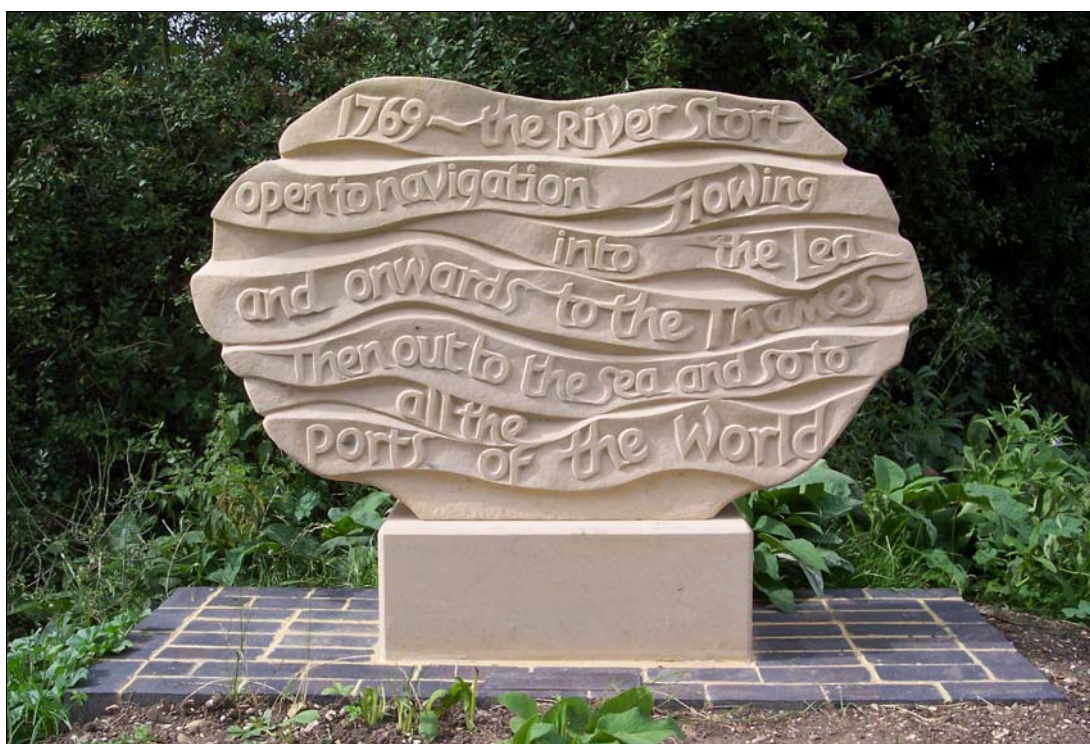
Richard has been with us for three years and has recently taken on the role of Boat Operations Co-ordinator. A Merchant Navy background then a career in materials management, during which he has owned several boats, made him the ideal candidate for the job. Richard has the unenviable task of keeping the fleet afloat, working in all weathers on a programme of preventative maintenance to reduce our reliance on costly emergency call-outs.

Tony Catchpole, Turnaround Supervisor

Tony leads the turnaround team, who are responsible for preparing and equipping the two holiday boats before every trip and the regular cleaning of the dayboats. This thankless task is typical of the many behind the scenes activities that are essential to the smooth operation of the organisation. He joined the Project seven years ago after meeting us at a boat show.

Phyllis Parris, Administrative Back-up

Phyllis is our spare Wendy, providing administrative cover in the office when Tina or Belinda are away, as well as being a regular crew member on the dayboats. After 17 years in the procurement department of GlaxoSmithKline, Phyllis joined the Project in 2007 as our procurement volunteer. She is responsible for our stores and purchasing, ensuring that we have everything we need for the smooth operation of our services, with a firm grip on the purse strings. Like Belinda, Phyllis's husband is also a volunteer with us and they have recently become proud owners of a 40-foot narrowboat, which is moored near Roydon. As if this isn't enough, she is also a healthy walks leader for Harlow Council.



Our Volunteers

We could not deliver our services without the tireless dedication of our team of volunteers, who give countless hours of their time in support of every aspect of our work. To each and every one of them, we owe our sincere thanks.

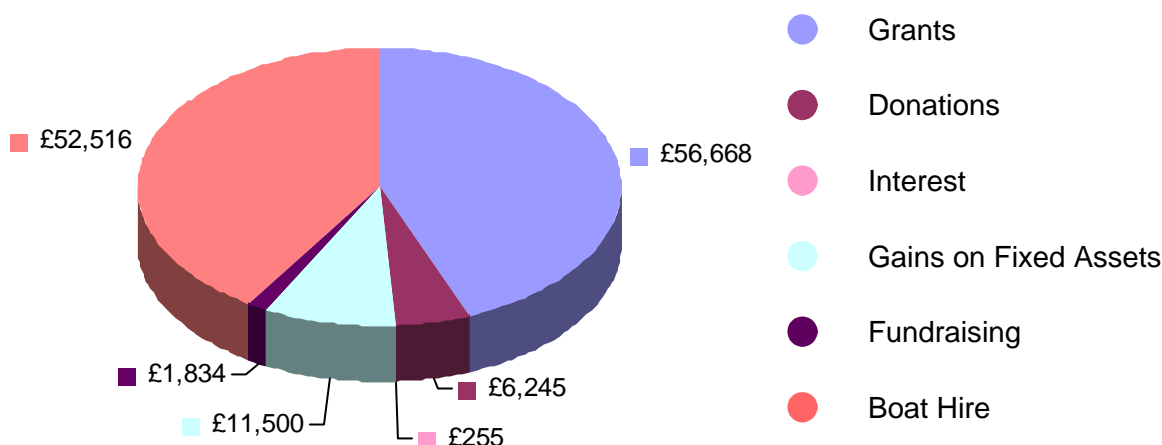
Ron Abbott	Adrian Crow	Alexander Howarth	Sheridan O'Brien
Teresa Aken	David Crowe	Roland Hudson	Pat O'Connor
Dawn Ambrose	Graham Curtis	Gerry Hughes	Tony O'Connor
Kevin Ambrose	Nigel Day	Les Hunt	Bob Parris
Christopher Ashworth	Peter Deards	Edward Hurley	Phyllis Parris
Patricia Askew	Deborah Deville	Imran Iqbal	David Pattison
Kerry Astle	Mark Dewey	Ian Israel	Derek Pearson
Simon Bacon	Anthony Deyes	Kuzna Jackson	Siobhan Pitts
Roger Badger	Helen Dobbie	Stuart Jacobs	Gary Planck
Jane Band	Sarah Dryden	Sue Jacobs	Belinda Plunkett
Banny Banyard	Brian Duggan	Margaret Jarrett	Tony Plunkett
Nigel Bardsley	Mark Duggan	Alan Jones	Victor Pocklington
Joe Barrett	Nichola Duggan	Christopher Jones	Louise Redstone
Robbie Barrett	Jean Duggleby	Kevin Joyce	Tony Redstone
Sue Barrett	Bob Dunkley	Petra Kay	Christopher Rhodes
Debbie Bartleman	Jack Eames	Tina Keehner	Marc Rowan
Brian Barton	Rosemary Eames	Christine Keskin	Sam Saunders
Paul Bates	George East	Kenneth Kindley	Patrice Sauzier
Christine Batley	Marie Edridge	Mohammed Kurrimbaccus	Yvonne Sauzier
David Batley	Jason Everett	Jacqueline Lamb	Wendy Saville
Ray Baxendale	John Eyre	Stephen Lamb	Martin Sawyer
Susan Baxendale	Barry Fargeot	Nick Lane	John Seward
Thomas Baxendale	David Farmer	Melvyn Lavender	Terry Shepherd
Joyce Bedu	Christopher Farrar	Gill Light	Andrew Sherwood
Rob Beeton	Phatchara Farrar	Martin Linsey	Carol Sizeland
Ernest Bentley	Terence Farrington	Ben Lotz	Tim Smith
Tom Bilbow	Derek Fenny	Donna Lyall	Kay Spicer
Andrew Binder	Janice Fenny	Sarah Mahon	Len Stace
Pauline Blunt Vyse	Andrew File	Keith Mahoney	Roy Stebbings
Christopher Burton	Derek Ford	Peter Mannering	Marcia Stephenson
Cliff Butterworth	James Foulds	Helen May	Frank Stewart
Jean Cantle	Alan Franklin	Jared May	Claire Stretch
Stephen Cantle	Alan Furness	Pete May	Anne Strike
Fiona Castle	Keir Gale	Robert McCabe	Stephen Swailes
Tracy Castle	Richard Gerrard	Corinne McCrum	Steve Taylor
Tony Catchpole	David Gibbs	Roger McDonald	Kenneth Templey
Mary Cayford	Peter Ginn	Garry Millington	Stephen Troup
Linda Cearns	Ray Golding	Kathryn Millner	John Waddington
Brian Cessford	Doreen Goodall	Martin Millward	Ian Walker
Kathy Challis	Bruce Grove	Caroline Monk	Jamie Wall
Mark Cheeseman	Stephen Guinn	Ian Monro	Ken Watson
Robert Child	Maurice Harvey	Rosalind Monro	Mervyn Webb
Carl Chughtai	John Hayes	Edd Moore	John White
Mick Clark	Anthony Heard	Terry Moore	Richard White
Christine Clarke	Martin Helbig	Tony Moore	David Wilcox
Collette Coburn	Elaine Hickford	Michael Motts	Belinda Wilkinson
Alexander Colledge	Geoff Hill	Len Mundy	Christopher Williams
Helen Cooley	Janet Hill	Thomas Neal	Derek Willmott
Paul Creamer	Angela Hodgson	Dave Newland	Richard Witter
Brian Croasdell	Stuart Hopking	Charlie Nielson	Lauren Wood
Robert Croft	Nicholas Horwood	Roger Nisbet	Andrew Woodliffe
Danny Cross	John Hoskin	Ann Nutt	Clare Wrenne
Susan Cross	Lee Howard	Joanne Oakley	Tony Writer

The 2007/2008 financial year was a good year for us. Turnover was high, due to the major projects being undertaken, notably the construction of the cabin to accommodate the new administrative headquarters at the mooring and the refurbishment of the holiday boat Red Watch. Both of these projects were achieved using grants from a range of sources.

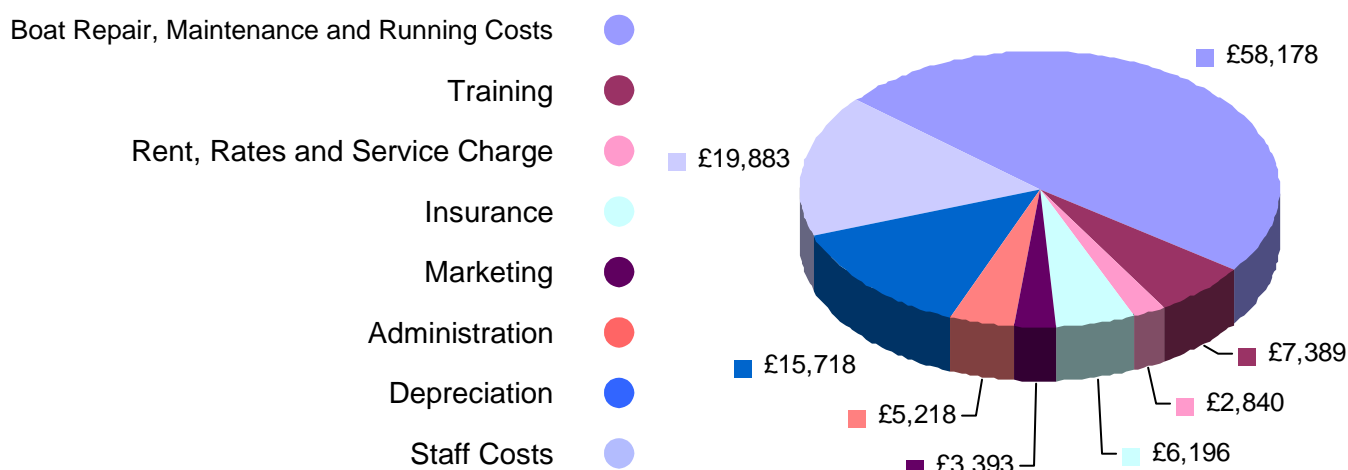
Income totalled £129,018, against expenditure of £118,815, resulting in a net surplus for the year of £10,203. A summary of the source and application of funds is shown below.

A copy of the full accounts is available on request.

Income



Expenditure



"Just had to write and thank you all after spending a fantastic day on one of your boats. The weather was beautiful, the boat was amazing, everyone was easily accommodated including my disabled sister. Plenty of food and drink. Last but by no means least, two lovely fellas to crew the boat"

Thank You

This annual report would be incomplete without acknowledgement of the support we have received throughout the year from the local business community, statutory bodies, other not-for-profit organisations, funders and individuals who have contributed in some way to our work. In particular, we would like to thank the Harlow Health Centres Trust for their generous support in providing our dayboat Stort Daybreak, British Waterways for the provision of our mooring facilities at Burnt Mill, the National Community Boats Association, the representative body for community boating in the UK and the Inland Waterways Association, who campaign for the interests of boaters in the UK.

We would also like to thank the following individuals and organisations for the diverse contributions they have made to our recent success.

T Arnold	A Jones
N Bardsley	Lets Ramble
Boshier Hinton Foundation	Local Network Fund
Branch D'Arcy	Lok'n'Store
Mr & Mrs Burton	Richard McCabe
Cartridge World	The Moorhen Public House & Restaurant
B Collins	Mulberry Trust
Co-Operative Community Fund	Old English Gentlemen
Cranfield Trust	Proctor & Gamble
Dreadnought Shipping	Quendon Enterprise Ltd
Mr & Mrs Ehlen	The Rotary Clubs of -
Essex Community Foundation	- Brentwood a Becket
Essex Community Initiatives Fund	- Epping
Mrs Evans	- Hornchurch & Upminster
Fox Memorial Trust	- Ongar
Harlow Community Services	- Saffron Walden
Harlow Mill Restaurant	- Stanstead Stort Valley
Harlow Outdoor Centre	A Seidler
Harlow Recreational Trust	Mr & Mrs Shepherd
M Hawkins	St Elizabeth's College
Mr Herring	R Stebbings
HSBC	K Templey
Jabsco	Ware Town Council

"Just a note to say what a wonderful day we had yesterday - despite the great British weather!"

"The boats were very comfortable and well equipped and provided ample space for us all."

"A big thank you from all of us to all of our skippers, who managed to stay cheerful all afternoon, despite getting soaked on our behalf!"

"We've had a splendid time thanks to the Canal Boat Project and our students have learned a lot."

"...a great big thank you to the Canal Boat Project for a wonderful two day trip last week."