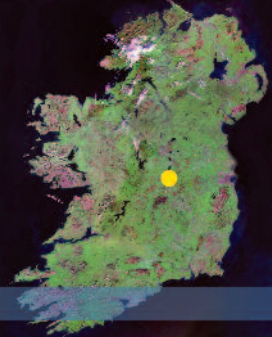




OFFALY UPDATE

FROM BERNADETTE QUINN



At the bye-law meeting: Ronnie Colton, IWAI; Cllr Fergus McDonnell; Cllr Finnian O'Neill; Cllr Liam Quinn; Cllr Noel Cribben; Cllr Molly Buckley; John Dolan, IWAI; Barry Cowen TD; Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick & Cllr John Foley. Absent when photo was taken: Cllr Sean O'Brien; Cllr Dervill Dolan & Cllr Brendan Killeavy.

AGM REPORT

The 2013 AGM of the Offaly Branch of the IWAI was held in Hugh Lynch's, Tullamore, Co Offaly on the 10 December 2013.

Before the AGM, Chairman John Dolan welcomed James Scully, Historian who delivered a very interesting talk, tracing the development of the Grand Canal from Edenderry to Shannon Harbour. He stopped to focus on four moments from the historical archives at different locations. James enthralled the audience with his humorous and knowledgeable presentation. The meeting extended its thanks to James for a very informative, entertaining and most interesting talk.

John Dolan commenced his report by thanking Hugh Lynch's for providing the meeting room for 2013 with complimentary refreshments at all the meetings.

John summarised the work of the committee and members and outlined the various branch activities for the year. These included

January: Attendance at IWAI Canal Action Group meeting in Athy

Attendance at Council Meeting Mullingar

February: Annual Social Event Tullamore Dew Visitors Centre

Submission to Offaly County Council Draft Development Plan 2014 to 2020

March: Two members' notices issued

April: Beyond the 12th Lock Talk by Mick Kinahan

Members Notice Issued

June: Launch of the Grand Canal Offaly Floating Festival in Ballycommon

July: Kids Camp with St Marys Youth and Community Centre

September: The Grand Canal Offaly Floating Festival & Gathering Event

October: Council Meeting Enniskillen
Know Your Boat Courses

The Chair thanked all those involved in these events with special mention to Bernadette Quinn and Alan Hughes for assistance on the Know Your Boat course, Offaly County Council and Hugh Lynch's for their support of the welcome packs for boaters and Hugh Lynch's for their support on the Festival Barbecue night.

John outlined the great project the Kids Camp with St Marys Youth and Community Centre turned out to be, as was the end result, in the production of a 2014 Calendar.

John also thanked Ronnie Colton for his work on the new Branch Website which is now live.

Based on feedback it was felt that the season of informative talks were a success and members hoped these could continue. It was agreed to continue to hold committee meeting separate to the branch meetings and to organise a number of information talks through the year.

In concluding comments the Chairperson thanked the committee for their hard work on behalf of the members and their support to him as Chair during the year.

The following committee were elected: John Dolan, Chairperson; Bernadette Quinn, Vice-chair/PRO; Alan Hughes, Hon Secretary; Rosemary Colton, Treasurer; Ronnie Colton, Webmaster; Charlie Kelleher, Membership

CANAL BYE-LAWS PUBLIC MEETING

A public meeting on the proposed amendments to the canal bye-laws was held in Hugh Lynch's, Tullamore on Thursday 16 January 2014.

This meeting was called so that any interested parties could meet, discuss and comment on the proposed changes by Waterways Ireland to the Canal Bye-laws. These changes will affect the Grand Canal, Royal Canal and River Barrow.

The meeting was attended by a large and diverse group, including members of Dail Eireann, County and Town Councils Representatives, IWAI members, fishermen, rowing club members, community amenity groups, Offaly Tourism, members of the business communities and members of the public.

The meeting heard details of the changes proposed to the Canal Bye-laws and that the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland

have major concerns on the proposed amendments to the existing bye-laws. The Grand Canal has been an integral element of the Offaly landscape for over 200 years. It is an important link with other waterways; a huge asset to the midlands and the overall Irish inland waterways system. It is a navigation and economic artery; can bring boat traffic as tourism business; and has significant amenity value to our communities.

The meeting was addressed by a significant number of people from the floor, the majority of whom were non-boaters. The concern over the proposed changes and the negative impact they will have on the system and communities along the waterways was unanimous.

More details on the meeting are available at www.iwai.ie/byelaws/byelaws.php

NEW WEBSITE

Offaly branch members were delighted to attend the first session of the training course gives by Colman Byrne, IWAI Webmaster in Mullingar Park Hotel.

We would like to express our thanks to Colman, who made it a fun day filled with information on the websites for the volunteers from various branches throughout Ireland. He finished with a question and answers session and was very giving with the information and skills.



Discussing bye law changes: Rosemary Colton & Alan Hughes (Offaly IWAI), Marcella Corcoran Kennedy TD, John Dolan & Bernadette Quinn (Offaly IWAI)