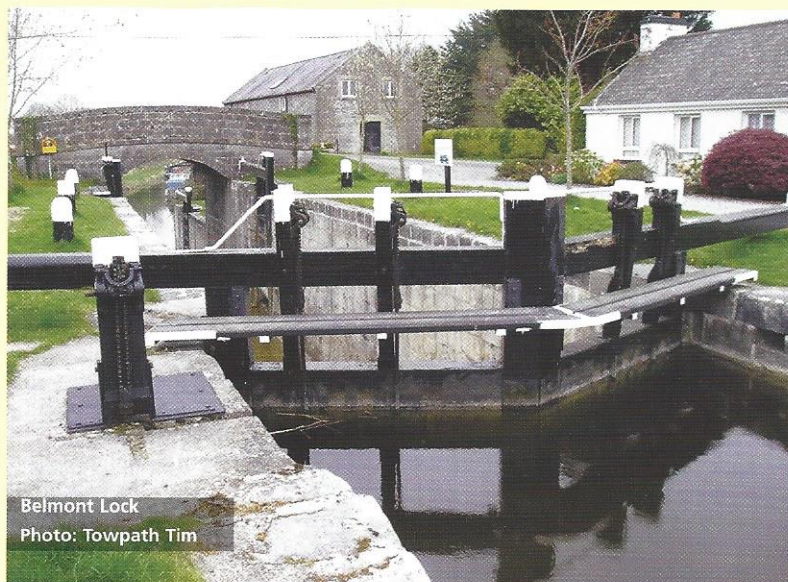


IWAI - EXPERIENCE THE GRAND CANAL

Cruise in Company



Belmont Lock
Photo: Towpath Tim

Big call out to all boaters to join the *IWAI - Experience the Grand Canal Cruise in Company* for three weekends during May and June. The end destination is Ballycommon at Lock 21 to join the Ballycommon Canal Renewal Group and local community in their monster cook out and family fun day with a programme of events on Sunday 1 June. There will also be a boater's social evening with invited guests on the canal banks in Ballycommon on the Saturday evening 31 May.

The intention of the cruise in company is to:

- Encourage first time canal users to try out a canal trip in the company of experienced users with associated helping hand at locks etc. along with an exciting itinerary of events and support.
- Give previous canal users some enjoyable weekends on the canal in the company of others

The Cruise in Company will join up with boats from Kildare IWAI and Dublin IWAI, some Heritage

Boat Association barges and those on the way out from the Dublin Rally at Ballycommon on Saturday 30 May.

Ballycommon is where the Kilbeggan line joins the Grand Canal, it is located just above Tullamore, 27.4 miles from the River Shannon and is accessed via Shannon Harbour and passing through the beautiful double lock at Belmont Mills, Pollagh with its bog oak church featuring Harry Clarke stained glass windows, passing the Tullamore Dew Centre in Tullamore

and the beautiful Boland Lock House on the last part of the trip between Tullamore and Ballycommon.

This trip will include a mix of sociable events and surprises that you would not experience if cruising individually.

As part of the programme, Offaly IWAI and Kildare IWAI will be holding a fund raising night in aid of the Mick Farrell Appeal Fund in Tullamore on Friday 5 June in Hugh Lynch's in Tullamore. The night will feature a first for a waterways event providing an evening of excitement, trips down memory lane and surprises along with an opportunity to mix with friends and share some refreshments. All will be revealed, so put the date

in your diary. All are welcome to attend whether on the Cruise in Company or not.

Ballycommon Canal Renewal Group was formed in July 2009 and their objective is to ensure that the 8.2 mile stretch of the Kilbeggan branch of the Grand Canal be restored as a navigable waterway for recreational and scenic purposes. They see the Kilbeggan Branch of the Grand Canal as a local amenity, which links Daingean and Tullamore with Kilbeggan with numerous points of interest in its environs. These include the flora and fauna along the way, the canal cut through the Eiscir Riada, ten bridges, an aqueduct and numerous stone arched culverts. The line is without locks for the entire stretch and is particular interest from both a heritage and tourism point of view. A walking tour of the line will feature as part of the trip.

Previous years have seen up to 100 boats of all shapes and sizes cruise to Tullamore for the three *Float to the Fleadh's* and the *Boat to the Banjo* festival including large barges, Haines 34 cruisers, and cruisers hired from the hire companies Silver line, Emerald Star, Carrick Craft and Waveline.

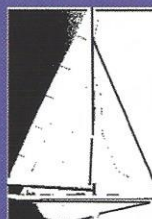
For a guide on canal dimensions and tips for boating on the canal visit www.offaly.iwai.ie to register email offaly@iwai.ie.

John Dolan

IWAI - EXPERIENCE THE GRAND CANAL

TIMETABLE

Date	Activity	Additional information
Sat 23 May	Cruise Shannon Harbour to Pollagh	Visit Pollagh Church. Social event in the Pull Inn
Sun 24 May	Cruise Pollagh to Tullamore	Car drop back to Shannon Harbour for skippers. Boat rest in Tullamore (harbour line) for week.
Sat 30 May	Cruise Tullamore to Ballycommon	Canal side events on Saturday evening & drinks in Ballycommon House bar.
Sun 31 May	Ballycommon family fun day	Packed full programme 'til late. and boat rally
Mon 1 June	Cruise Ballycommon to Tullamore	Boat rest in Tullamore (Harbour Line) for week.
Fri 5 June	Mick Farrell Appeal.	(Social Hugh Lynch's Tullamore, 9pm 'til late. fundraising event.) Offaly and Kildare IWAI Drinks & sing along in the Pull Inn
Sat 6 June	Cruise Tullamore to Pollagh	Memories to keep and stories to tell! And just two weeks to the start of the Shannon Harbour Rally
Sun 7 June	Cruise Pollagh to Shannon Harbour	



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