



The Batchworth Telegraph

Newsletter of the Friends, Summer 2014

Our Best Festival Yet!



Photo by Greg Townsend

This May saw the Trust's 21st Rickmansworth Festival; the event came of age and many thousands of people enjoyed the party. Even the weather joined in and was the most favourable I can remember since I have been organising the

event. I was slightly concerned as this was my 13th year coordinating the dedicated team who run the event - especially with the winter weather and flooding we had in February - I thought superstitions about 13 ...

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Our Chairman Speaks...



Summer 2014 Updates



Maia's Meanderings



Au Revoir, Gary



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Our Best Festival Yet! (continued)



Photo by Greg Townsend

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... were going to play out but my fears were unfounded! The rain stopped on the Tuesday evening before we started work on site and stayed away until after we had cleared up. We still had a couple of issues when people got stuck in areas they had been told not to drive on - including a van driver who removed the barrier put there to stop him driving into the mud! However, based on how wet the ground was earlier in the year, the Aquadrome behaved marvellously, helped significantly by the excellent support from all the Three Rivers District Council grounds staff as usual.

All areas of the event seemed to go well to plan.

We moored a record number of boats, 117 in total. The Waterspace team led by John Brice and Chris Bennett managed all the little challenges expected when you get this number of boaters who all want to moor in the same place. By early Friday evening everyone was happy and ready to enjoy the weekend's event.

The entertainment team led by Carol Johnson and supported by Alan Rooke in the Owlsworld tent delivered a very diverse selection of over 70 high quality acts, ensured the whole schedule ran to time and kept all the performers happy - an amazing feat. Carol even managed to address the unplanned replacement of a main stage act when the lead singer of a young band

Our Best Festival Yet!

(continued)



Photos by Greg Townsend

got stage fright at the number of people waiting to see his band perform, hid in his car and would not come out! Just an ordinary day in the life of a music entrepreneur.

We had a very straightforward site infrastructure build managed by Mark Gardiner and Paul Childerhouse and were ready much earlier than I can remember in previous years. The PA and communications team led by Dennis Cater also ran a very smooth operation and seemed to be all ready to go earlier than usual. We also positioned over 150 traders and caterers through Friday and Saturday with very little of the traffic congestion we have had in previous years.

All other parts of the operation worked well, including: the trip boats at Batchworth; Chess Valley Rugby Club managing the car park; the admin team in Festival control; all the volunteers who helped collect donations and many others who looked after the Lock Centre and Little Union Canal over the weekend.

Of course we did have some niggles but these were minor when taken in context of the scale of the event, and we can learn from these and improve what we do for next year. We have held our debrief meeting and have plans in place to address these areas and will go forward knowing we successfully delivered one of the largest community and canal festivals in the south of the UK and entertained over 25,000 visitors during the weekend.

We also secured important new major sponsors for the Festival, including Warner Bros Studios, Waitrose and Travis Perkins. These were in addition to regular supporters: LoCo2 Energy, The Feathers, and many other local businesses and organisations. This sponsorship is vital as it bridges the gap between what we can raise in income from trade and catering in advance of the event and the £35,000 it costs the Trust up front to put the Festival on.

Finally, and very importantly,

we raised over £30,000 from donations to support the work of the Trust. The importance of this cannot be underestimated as it secures our education work for another year and also allows us to put aside some contingency funds, as I have mentioned elsewhere. The Festival is now our largest source of donated income and essential in securing the financial viability of our organisation. Many thanks again to all of you who worked on the team in the run-up to the event and during the weekend.

We will start our planning cycle for the 2015 Festival in September so reserve the weekend of 16th and 17th May next year in your diaries. If you are not yet involved or are aware of others who have had a great time at the Festival and would like to be part of the team – let me know. We are always looking for enthusiastic helpers and other sponsors to ensure the event continues for many years to come.

David Montague



Chairman's Chat...

Welcome to the summer issue of *Batchworth Telegraph* for 2014, the biannual magazine from Rickmansworth Waterways Trust (RWT). So far this year has been one of contrasts, with the wettest winter on record and our best Festival yet.

In February I visited the Aquadrome to see the extent of the flooding and took several pictures showing new lakes and rivers where we normally positioned the fun fair, trade stalls and marquees. Unable to flow fast enough over the gates at Stockers lock, water was flowing from the canal into the Aquadrome. The paths across the Aquadrome were closed and, with just 14 weeks to go until the start of site build for the Festival, I started thinking how long it would take the water to go down and the ground to dry out. That was when and if it stopped raining and, unfortunately for many people, it did not!

The water continued to rise and then the Chess burst its bank at the bottom of Scots Hill cutting off Watford from Rickmansworth. It was the weekend of our annual Ceilidh and the detour from my house to get to the Mill End Sports and Social Club involved the M25! We continued to watch the water in the Chess rise

behind the Lock Centre and Mark took the precaution of raising the fridge and freezer on blocks and placing sand bags along behind the Lock Centre. The water in the canal was so high that Roger, still to have the ballast replaced after the work last winter, threatened to float across the towpath, risking getting stranded or worse. The water peaked a few inches below the Lock Centre and so we had a narrow escape.

However some others were not so lucky and many other local residents had a stressful few weeks.



The rain eventually stopped, the waters went down and the ground dried out. Sitting here in the Lock Centre writing this on a sunny (well it was when I started...) Sunday you would not realise what had occurred just a few months earlier.

We have now just about caught up with the essential maintenance work on the Pride

of Batchworth and Roger. We have completed the repainting of the outside of the Pride and applied new decals. The toilet and the back of the cabin has been rebuilt, and we now have a boat that does not leak from the inside. The carpet floor has been replaced with non-slip matting and we have also installed a new folding table, CD player and non-slip treads on the seating area at the front and many other minor improvements. Many thanks to the volunteers who have helped with all the work, which included moving the boat between the work locations. Thank you, especially those who cleaned out the interior after the very damp winter – not a pleasant task.

Roger has also had further work carried out at Jem Bates dock this winter as part of its ongoing conservation plan. The major job in any work of this nature on Roger is removing and replacing the 15 tons of steel ballast – all done by our volunteers, so thank you, again.

Financially the Trust is now better positioned than I can remember since I have been involved with RWT, and that is going back over 15 years. We have firstly benefited from some very generous individual donations to support our work,



Chairman's Chat...

(Continued)

always looking to January when the first Festival receipts come in to keep us in the black. We then rely on the Festival to provide enough money from donations collected over the Festival weekend to supplement our other sources of income to keep us solvent for another year. This of course puts us at the mercy of the Great British weather and I have always dreaded a total wash-out weekend which would place us in a very difficult position. Also, the funding climate now is much more difficult than it was several years ago with many more charities chasing a dwindling amount of grant funding to support their work. The success of the Festival this year gives us a little breathing space and means we now can put aside some reserves which will protect against a very wet Festival when we could get very few visitors. We can also put money aside, as we mentioned in the last issue, to support long-term strategic reserve for replacing key assets, such as the Pride of Batchworth.

We are also steadily building our income streams in other areas as we cannot rely too heavily on the Festival. We are building our Charter business, led by Jillian Christensen and ably supported by Paul Rusack

and Tony Margetts, who do the majority of the skippering. We have invested in new banners for the boat to promote the Charter business and have a new Charter leaflet, and all this helps attract people to use the service. The Lock Centre has been refreshed and the ice cream ordering and other stock replenishment are being properly managed so we present a much more professional showcase of what we do to our visitors. We are also getting out more to promote the Trust at events such as Little Venice, Croxley Revels and the Chorleywood Village Day and plan to do more of this next year. Our presence at Croxley Revels resulted in very useful leads for Learning at the Lock, and a Batchworth treasure hunt designed by Pat and Fabian with a one hour charter as a prize generated more enquiries about Charters.

All these efforts to broaden what we do require more volunteers to support our work. This is especially important for our education programme which, as I write this, is in its busiest period. We have been successful in attracting several new people interested in helping deliver what we do but we need to attract more. So if you know of others through your network of contacts who

could be interested in joining us, please pass their details on to Mark.

We have had several social events including a very successful Ceilidh on Saturday February 8th following our first event in 2013, and I hope we can do another event in early February next year. We actually sold out of tickets and had a capacity crowd of 120 dancing to the music of "All Hands Around". Another successful event at Mill End Sports and Social Club, generously provided by Carl the manager free of charge for our fundraising events. If you have suggestions for other events we could organise, or would even like to organise something yourself, then please let me have your ideas.

On a final note, we also hope to have two new Trustees join us in the very near future, and as soon as we have confirmed everything I will introduce them to you.

I think that is all I have for the moment. Please continue to let me know of the improvements you want to see and if you have ideas on how the Trust can develop what it does further.

David Montague

Summer 2014

Updates:

Learning at the Lock

In February 2014, in anticipation of the new season for Learning at the Lock, a number of volunteers including Jillian, John, Pat the Fabian gave up a week of their time to help refurbish the Mill. The walls and such like were prepared, painted or varnished, and a significant amount of old material was recycled! New props and wall hangings were purchased and, all in all, the Mill classroom now looks like a place of education and fun.



Here are Jillian and John hard at work.

The first LaTL was on the 25th March and to date (20th June) we have had 27 confirmed bookings. I expect this number to rise come September and October. So far around 400 children have passed through the programme with volunteers providing 351 hours of their time.

We continue to receive exceptional feedback from the schools, teachers and the children themselves, which is displayed on one of the walls

of the classroom. This is down to the wonderful dedication and hard work of our LaTL volunteers, and I wish to add my own heartfelt thanks to them.

Anyone within the Trust who feels they may be able to help with presenting LaTL is more than welcome to join us during a school visit. It's exceptionally rewarding and great fun too. If you happen to know of anyone keen on education and able to spare a few hours of their time, then please get them to contact me and I can arrange for them to come and see what we do.

Lock Centre

Again during the winter months, the lock centre was given a spruce up around the entrance foyer and doors. The centre is open every day and I would like to express my thanks to all the weekday and weekend volunteers who keep our presence at a high level down at the Lock.

On 20th March, we organised a lock painting and tidy day in conjunction with the Canal & River Trust, who supplied the materials, and seven of our volunteers braved the weather to paint and tidy up the area around Batchworth Lock.



Here is Joanna brush in hand painting a bollard!

On the 10th June we were delighted to welcome 14 volunteers from GE Capital and a couple of our own fine chaps on a volunteers work party who helped paint the Chess Lock, footbridge & Batchworth Lock. Once again we had the materials supplied by the Canal & River Trust with whom we now have an excellent relationship. My thanks go to Miriam Tedder from C&RT for all her hard work.



GE Capital volunteers on Batchworth Lock

In January two fence panels at the Little Union Canal blew down and Martin & John got to work very quickly to get new panels inserted. The Little Union canal still needs some remedial and renovation work

Summer 2014 Updates:

(Continued)

done on it especially to the brickwork and lock gates. It is however an asset that we need to maintain, look after and use.

Pride of Batchworth

The Pride was painted externally during February at High Line Yachting at Cowley. She came back with a great paint job and we need to keep maintaining it on a regular basis.

During March she finally received the new toilet and rear flooring after a undiagnosed leak caused significant damage to the whole of the rear portion of the cabin.

The old carpet was replaced with rubberised carpet tiles. A new audio player was fitted and the inside was rubbed down and painted ready for the new season.

Recently a minor fuel leak was spotted from the secondary fuel pump but because we now have a regular regime of inspection and maintenance, this was discovered quickly and remedied. A carbon monoxide and fire alarm have been fitted and new ropes, shackles, battery box and fenders have been bought.

The regular 'Maintenance Fridays' are an excellent way to get involved with the running of both the Pride & Roger and this has proved a good way of keeping on top of the jobs that need doing on a working boat.



Before painting



After painting



With decals newly placed

There were some spectacular scenes down at the Lock Centre in January during the flooding. The River Chess flooded into the garden at the rear of the premises and reached the back wall. Sandbagging has only limited effect! The Canal flooded!



Mark Saxon

Maia's Meanderings, a Boater's Blog by Fabian Hiscock



On the Macclesfield, 2012

Starting out

Twenty years after the steelwork started on our new boat, we're getting ready to set off for some serious boating. At the end of May we'll head off via the Severn for the northwest canals and perhaps the Trent and the other side of the Pennines. Unfortunately Maia is a couple of feet too long to go through the Leeds and Liverpool locks - of the Calder and Hebble if we go up the Rochdale - so a bit more effort may be required.

We plan to be away until September (although we'll have to come back every couple of weeks for various things here, like the mail, but we won't be home long!). This summer is for boating.

And we'll use this Blog to keep track of where



At Market Harborough a couple of years ago we've been and what we plan to do. We hope people will come to see us from time to time, and will be able to check here where we're likely to be before giving us a call to tell us you're coming. I'll put something more up when we start.

Maia's Meanderings

(continued)

Thursday 12th June - off we go at last!

Well, a month after my first post we got away today! Blisworth (actually Gayton Junction) to Whilton, up the locks, along the summit past Norton junction where the Leicester section goes off.

We met an old friend, Trevor Maggs, boating alone as usual in his historic boat, Corona, as he has done for over 40 years. He was coming down the Whilton flight as we started up and continued up to the top of the flight. The large wharf just on the right of the picture, Buckby Wharf, was therefore quite an important inter-modal transfer point.



Maia outside the New Inn, at the top of the flight.

The pub has been here since at least the 1790s and stands at the crossing of what is now the A5 and the canal.



Norton Junction, with the Leicester Section (the original Grand Union) going off towards Leicester and Nottingham



Norton Junction - gauging cottage

These pictures show us arriving at the top of the Whilton locks and then going on past Norton Junction to stop for the night about half a mile further on. This was where the original Grand Union, another narrow canal, met the Grand Junction, and took traffic to join the wide Leicestershire and Northamptonshire Union canal which had been intended to link the Trent, Soar and Nene, but had run out of money at Market Harborough. And there we were in open country some way short of the tunnel, on a beautiful summer evening.

Maia's Meanderings

(continued)

Saturday 14th June - at Warwick

Saturday 14 June: After a couple of days without a useful phone signal, we've reached Warwick, will go up the Hatton flight this morning and be heading for Stratford from Lapworth tonight. We started, of course, on the Braunston summit, where Julia Cook passed us in her 1937 working boat Towcester, and we bought 100 litres of fuel. We then went through the tunnel, queued for the locks for a bit, then headed steadily down with various pauses, but in the end met no-one coming up. Very odd, at what should be quite a busy time.



Julia Cook arriving with fuel, in her fine 1937 Town-class (large Northwich) boat Towcester

The Braunston Summit is interesting in its own right, being much shorter than Barnes and Jessop will have wanted. A canal engineer

was always concerned about the water supply, which was crucial at the summit from which it had to descend with the boats, so the summit pound had to act as a reservoir and will have been as long as possible. Braunston is only three miles, which didn't provide much reserve. The reservoirs, which also had to be provided in quite large volume, discharged into the summit (this one is near Daventry) but it was also necessary to pump water back from the bottom of a flight of locks descending from the summit. That was also done at Braunston. Water was a perennial problem for a canal company. Braunston's Stop House, now providing offices for Canal and River Trust, was built in 1796 at the original junction of the Grand Junction and the Oxford. When the line of the Oxford was moved and straightened in the 1830s it was no longer at the junction but has remained in use ever since.



Braunston Stop House 1796

Maia's Meanderings

(continued)



The 1830s iron bridge carrying the towpath over the original line of the Oxford. This was bypassed when the Oxford was shortened, and became a busy Arm of the Grand Junction with a boat builder and other facilities there.



Another 1830s Horseley Iron Bridge used to deal with the changes to the Oxford's line when it was straightened. This carries the Oxford's own towpath over the new junction.

Continuing along the five-mile length of the modified line of the Oxford takes you to Napton junction, Wigram's turn, where the Warwick and Napton went off in the 1790s. Along with the Warwick and Birmingham, always closely associated, this was the key to the direct route from Birmingham and London which the GJC was providing. The GJC tried to have it built broad, like its own line, but that wasn't done until the new Grand Union did it 140 years later: in the meantime, the Oxford charged punitive tolls on boats moving between the Warwick and Napton and the GJC at Braunston, but it didn't stop the traffic for London. The difference in gauge of the canals did inhibit it, however! For the full story, see Alan Faulkner's book, *The Warwick Canals* (Railway and Canals Historical Society 1985).

Anyway, we've gone on down the locks to Long Itchington, stopping on a fine evening just short of the bottom lock of the Stockton flight. And on the Saturday, we just continued the steady drop down to Leamington and Warwick. In the afternoon, we went for a stroll in Leamington and found ourselves in the middle

of the annual Peace Festival - not much peace in evidence, but quite a lot of festival! Bought socks made of recycled cotton, saw children playing rather well with Hula Hoops and several bands playing at the same time - rather drowned out by the public drumming participation group! And moved on a bit further to be overnight just short of The Cape. Hatton follows!



Maia's Meanderings

(continued)

Tuesday 17th June - arrived at Stratford on Avon

Well, we've just got here after a couple of days in the e-wilderness. Having stopped overnight on Saturday just before Cape Locks on the edge of Warwick, we started up the Hatton flight of 21 locks just after 9.30 with another boat from Kate Boats of Warwick. First couple of locks no real problem, then disaster, showing just how easy it is to get distracted when locking, especially on the "new" (1934) locks on the northern GU. Maia came off the centre line of the rising board just at the top and before we could get the paddles shut had lifted the gate off its pintle! Reported to CRT, warned others coming up and down and continued. Fortunately, it only took CRT about 30 minutes to jack the gate back into position - just as well. A pretty powerful reminder, though, and I paid careful attention for the rest of the flight.



Hatton Locks, from about half way up

For those not familiar, here is Hatton from about half way up! These, of course, are the new wide locks, replacing the original narrow Warwick and Birmingham ones which the GJC tried to have built wide right from the start but took them another 140 years to achieve.

Anyway, we got to the top and on to Kingswood, five miles further on where the Stratford meets it. On the way is the short Shrewley tunnel, whose horse path doesn't go through the tunnel (so no good for towing) but above and separately from the main bore. This just shows the great range of ideas applied to building all the various canals of the period.



Shrewley Tunnel, with the horse path in its separate tunnel

Another narrow canal, originally planned to connect Stratford on Avon and Birmingham under an act a month earlier than the GJCs but, running out of money, they made this junction from Birmingham.

Maia's Meanderings

(continued)



At Lapworth basin

Here we are taking on water at Lapworth, having just turned south for Stratford on the part of the canal completed in about 1816 after several years delay.

This is the junction cottage, built with the barrel-shaped roof typical of this canal, with a number of other service and maintenance buildings around the basin. On the right is the short link to the Grand Union, the locks up to Birmingham are on the left, and the descent to Stratford is to the right.



Another view of the basin shows lock 20 of the 27 in the Lapworth flight, and the toll cottage next to it. The entrance to the basin from the Grand Union is on the right: you can

see the space provided, not only for boats to turn but also because this was for a number of years as far as the Stratford got from Birmingham before it ran out of money for about 15 years, so this was effectively the terminus basin.



Thursday 19th June, at Stratford upon Avon

We've had a couple of days in Stratford upon Avon and have come home for the weekend - Croxley Revels and various other things! We plan to return on Monday.

The descent from Lapworth was, as always on this canal, very pleasant - quite hard work and slow for a narrow canal, but the southern

Maia's Meanderings

(continued)

Stratford is one of the great stretches of British waterways. We started just short of the M40 crossing, in something of a procession of boats all heading downhill, and stopped at Wilmcote just about where we did last year.

On Tuesday, we set off down the Wilmcote flight, the locks of which are arranged in groups of 3 - 5 - 3. Good value from the bicycle here, helped by collaboration from the experienced boat ahead: he left the bottom gates open while he went ahead to set his own next lock, so went ahead quickly, and I cycled down behind him to set our next lock before going back to finish off our own, with Pat steering. Worked a treat!

A pause at the hire base above Lock 52 to use the facilities, and then down the last few locks into Bancroft Basin in the middle of Stratford at



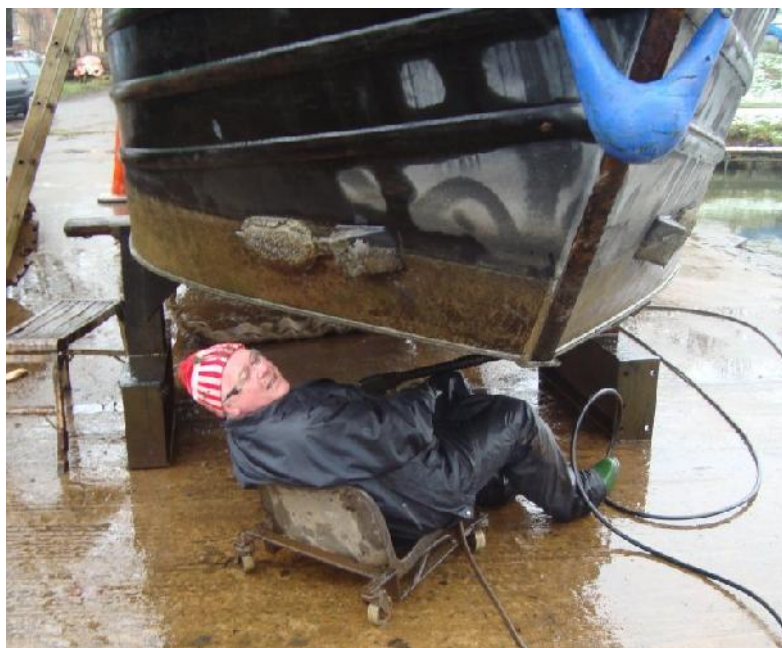
Maia in Bancroft Basin - surrounded by visitors, of course!

1300. Perfect timing - a couple of mooring places left, one of which we took happily. We then did the "tourist" thing - including a couple of tickets to see Anthony Sher's Falstaff in Henry IV part two - brilliant! And on Wednesday 18th, a day of Shakespeare's Birthplace - especially the gardens, which are really well presented at this time of year. The weather, of course, has been perfect, which helps!

Thursday 19th was really getting ready to come away. The plan, arranged with the Avon Navigation Trust, was to drop down onto the river and spend the weekend on one of the recreation ground moorings. So it was very disappointing to be told this morning that the moorings were closed for the Regatta on the Saturday, just when we would have needed to be away from the boat. So we've taken a bit of a chance on the safety of the moorings just above the basin - backed up there, secured as well as possible, and headed for the train.

If you want to know more of Fabian's and Pat's travels throughout the summer, follow the blog: www.nbmaia2014.blogspot.co.uk

Au Revoir, Gary!



Gary has participated in his last Trustee meeting and is now hopefully safely cruising the slightly larger canals of Southern France. His boat was loaded onto a lorry at the end of May to make the long journey to the warmer south as he “wimped out” of taking it across the channel himself. Gary joined as a Trustee in December 2011 and has been a key member of our team with responsibility for our boats. Some of the best pictures I have of him are in one of his many hats either under the Pride covered in paint (see above!), or freezing at her helm getting snowed on! I don't blame him for thinking boating in the south of France would be a much better option!

One thing he will have to cope with is the French making comments about the small size of British narrow boats, but size is not everything. Just try doing the reverse and bringing a French barge to Britain and watch it get stuck as soon as it tried to explore the network!

I know he has sublet his mooring at Hampton Hall, so the move may not be forever. We wish Gary all the best for the future and thank him very much for all his work for RWT, and when our weather gets too much we hope your invitation to come and visit is honoured!

David Montague

Don't ignore it, report it!



Emergency Hotline

If you see:

- Damage or danger to the natural environment
- Pollution
- Poaching
- Risks to wildlife
- Fish in distress
- Illegal dumping of hazardous waste
- Flooding incidents

Ring 0800 80 70 60

**Call free, 24 hours a
day, 7 days a week.**

This number is for emergencies only, not for general enquiries. Prompt action can help the environment.



Upcoming Events

Every Tuesday evening - Quiz Night at the Feathers

August 2014 (TBD) - RWT Garden Party

November 2014 (TBD) - Learning at the Lock Volunteers Event

Saturday 28th November - Rickmansworth Christmas Evening

Saturday 13th December 2014 - Carols at Batchworth

Saturday 7th February 2015 (TBC) - Ceilidh and supper at Mill End Sports and Social Club, Penn Road

Saturday 16th - Sunday 17th May 2015 - Rickmansworth Festival

Please refer to rwt.org.uk
for further information on these and other events

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