

The Batchworth Telegraph

Newsletter of the Friends, Summer 2018

25 Years of the Rickmansworth Festival



Inside

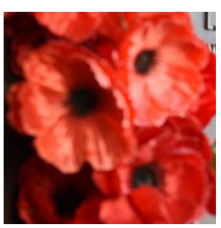
Our Chairman Speaks...



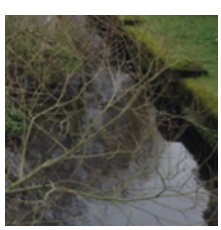
Building has begun



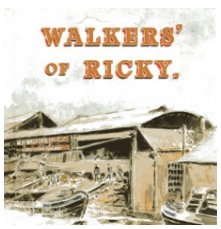
WW1 Water-ways



Chess Tree Work



Walkers' of Ricky



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Chairman's Chat...

Welcome to the summer issue of the Batchworth Telegraph for 2018, the twice yearly magazine from Rickmansworth Waterways Trust. After winning the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service last year I thought it would be difficult to match this achievement in 2018. However earlier this year we raised sufficient funds to enable us to commence building our new Education Centre at Batchworth Lock. By the time you read this we hope to have started on the foundations, and if all goes to plan we should have the construction and fit out finished during October 2018. However to achieve this we have had to make some difficult decisions to reduce costs and will still need more funds to fully complete the project. I will report more on this later in this issue. We also ran our 25th Rickmansworth Festival so two excellent achievements already in 2018!

After a pretty awful start to our 2018 season the weather has improved and we are now as busy as ever at the Lock Centre. Easter presented us with continual rain and few visitors with even fewer wanting a charter or a boat trip. Now the sun is shining the Pride of Batchworth rarely stops moving and the ice cream seems to evaporate from the freezer! It just shows how weather dependant our footfall is at Batchworth so let's hope the summer continues in this way.

We are now in our busiest period for Learning at the Lock (LatL) with up to three schools coming on consecutive weeks in June. Some are returning schools which have been coming for many years, but Rob has also been successful in attracting several new schools to come along. Rob has been trying really hard to promote our organisation's unique educational offering, however schools are really challenged for funds which makes a day out, even one which offers as much as we do, quite an expensive day when coach travel is taken into account. Rob is also making extensive efforts to reach out to schools outside our area to widen our potential client base, and he has run several different courses configured for schools which wanted to bring a larger number of children or had more limited time.

This flexibility is important to attract more groups, however the key thing that is going to help Rob's efforts is having our new Education Facility. Rob sees a great opportunity to widen our offering to do more adult education visits,

Chairman's Chat Continued

secondary school education, as well as continuing to run LatL for younger children. Several other local charities host visits for children but also have significantly more visitors from older age groups. A new facility will mean we will have a much better capability to offer heritage-based learning for all ages. Fabian Hiscock is already developing some ideas around this and it could present an exciting opportunity for the Trust. Rob is also very much looking forward to having the new building as he will not have to keep setting up and storing away everything we use for a LatL in the room we currently hire!

As the Pride of Batchworth has been very busy recently it has been more important than ever to keep the boat fully operational and reliable. We have a regular service schedule organised by Mark and Chris Flaherty, which ensures all routine and non-routine maintenance is addressed promptly. Last week when I was down at Batchworth Lock I saw Martin Stokes, aided by Roy Rosenthal, completing some minor welding to a metal support for the front fender. For a while the Pride has experienced intermittent starting issues and Mark and Chris have just installed a new starter motor and also removed and shortened some of the redundant wiring left from when the boat was all electric. Currently this seems to have resolved the issue but we will wait and see long term! All this work helps keep the boat reliable so many thanks to everyone who supports this work.

Roger made its usual journey to Little Venice for Canal Cavalcade around the early May bank holiday. We had perfect weather for boating down and back as well as for the actual Cavalcade weekend. We have an increasing number of people who are getting confident in handling our historic wooden boat, and I include myself as I managed to get Roger around the Little Venice basin in the historic boat parade without hitting anything! It is important that we continue to get Roger out and about boating and we will continue to look for opportunities to do so. The new innovation of having "GoBoats" with a hire base in the Paddington basin under the "control" of novice hire boaters weaving in and out of all the narrow boats made navigation more interesting than usual. Especially on a sunny Friday evening when parties of people under the influence were playing bumper cars with the queue of boats going into the basin. Trying to explain to the slightly inebriated occupants of a small fibreglass boat that it would not be a good idea to get in between a steel and a wooden boat was interesting.

Roger however was not quite as busy with visitors as we hoped as the new developments in the Paddington basin meant our mooring was a bit hidden from view behind two new two-deck "party boats". We also were requested to remove our RWT banner flag from the towpath by the very efficient CCTV aided security, making it even more difficult for visitors to know where we were. Next year we have requested that we have a more prominent position as an attraction and this request could be made a little easier by the fact that Mark Saxon has now taken over the organisation of Little Venice!

I hope the sun continues to shine and attract visitors to Batchworth for the remainder of 2018. We have an exciting few months ahead as all our plans for our building come to fruition and I look forward to welcoming you to our new Education Centre at Batchworth before the end of 2018!

Best regards,

David



Mark Reports

June and July are always a good time for reflection especially as we are all now recovering from another first-class Rickmansworth Festival.

I must add my own thanks to every single person who gave up their time or who has given up their time over the past 25 years in order to ensure our charity can continue. The Festival is our main fundraising event and without the dedication, good humour and sheer hard work of our festival team, trustees, bucket collectors, litter pickers, money counters, administration and everyone else it would not be the huge success it obviously is.

A 25th anniversary is a milestone in any organisation and as primarily a heritage education charity I cannot be more pleased to say that we will be breaking ground on our new Education Centre on Monday 2nd July.

The shop and information centre at Batchworth Lock has been staffed continuously since January, and in fact has only been closed for one day! Looking back at my records I can tell you that since 2015 the shop has been open all bar 18 days! That is a wonderful achievement and remains testimony to the volunteers who do a regular day or the ones we can call on to fill in gaps where needed. We are still looking for someone who can provide us some cover on a regular basis on a Sunday which will leave Graham able to undertake ferry trips. Sundays are a really busy day and it's a great opportunity to become the public face of the Trust. Please let me know if you fancy giving this a bash and we'll get you trained up.

The area around Batchworth Lock continues to be looked after by us under the adoption agreement with the Canal & River Trust. With regular litter picking, a new mobile floating plastic patrol, grass cutting and painting, we can really provide our visitors with an excellent experience of the benefits of being near water. Batchworth Bridge was cleared of ivy and repainted during the early part of the year and our young volunteers from St Martin's School undertook a litter pick of the towpath from Lot Mead Lock all the way to Stockers Lock.

The 'Pride of Batchworth', workhorse of our ferry trips, charter business and LaTL, continues to be available for use throughout the year. Our regular inspections, repairs and replacements allow is to be confident in its ability to bring in all important income. My thanks go to all of the Pride Skippers and Crew who give up their time to provide this unique service to our customers.

This is a really busy time of year for the Trust and I really appreciate all the help you provide in keeping us going. I have a reminder that on Saturday 14th July, the Rickmansworth Folk Festival comes back to the Lock once more, based at Batchworth and at the Feathers pub this is another great event utilising our wonderful position down on the canal. Please do make the effort to come along to see local Morris sides, singers, players and poets!

Mark Saxon

Rob Reports

Eleven days before our first booking the country was in the grip of 'The Beast from the East.' When St Peter's School from Mill End arrived we had lovely spring weather, only to have the 'Return of the Beast' some few days afterwards. The weather is an important consideration for our bookings, which fortunately seem to coincide with sunny days. The number of bookings themselves looked promising in the winter. St Anthony's booked two dates this year after having one date last year. We were pleased to welcome two new schools, St Teresa's from Princes Risborough – their teacher had taught in Rickmansworth before, and Canary Wharf. Canary Wharf tried to visit us last year but there were no available dates. Thankfully their persistence paid off and we could accommodate them.

Apart from new schools, we have also welcomed some new volunteers. Marilyn Smith, Mike Lansdown and Peter Sloper have been regular visitors to the Learning at the Lock sessions. I have not received many enquires for late bookings during the summer and the number of sessions is down from last year. I am in the process of making some bookings in the autumn. Schools in the local area, around North London and Buckinghamshire have been emailed to promote our excellent programme. I have just had an enquiry from one new school, so not a great return from the number of messages that have been sent out, but at least it is a start.

St Martin's School have maintained their links with us. Not only have they provided a significant donation to the new building fund, but they have booked two LatL sessions. In addition to this a group of 'Eco-Warriors' from the school came to do a good shift of litter picking along the side of the canal and some painting- most of the paint did go on to the walls! Another booking from the 1st Rickmansworth Cub Scouts could lead us to a new avenue of LatL sessions with Scout groups. The quite large group were able to squeeze in a full session into 90 minutes. Some excellent time keeping from helmsman Fabian Hiscock kept the programme on schedule.

The best news for Learning at the Lock is that the new classroom will be going ahead! This has got to raise our profile in the local area and give us an opportunity to diversify the types of groups that can use the facility. I have sent out some tentative messages to local secondary schools, but have no success in securing a booking. There are many adult groups that, I am sure, would relish the opportunity to have a heritage tour of Batchworth.

There are exciting times ahead. I am confident that the challenge for making good use of the new classroom will be met. The trustees have worked hard and agonised over the details. A great deal of work has been put into making the new classroom happen. I am sure that everyone connected with learning at the Lock will like to thank the trustees for their tremendous effort.

Rob Moore

Rickmansworth Festival: 25 Years

Our 25th Rickmansworth Festival was quite unusual.

Firstly, we had some significant competition from a minor local wedding and apparently there was also a football match that a few people were interested in.

Secondly not one drop of rain fell on the Festival site from when we started setting up the marquees on the Wednesday right through until the end of the Tuesday after the Festival weekend when we had to put the Aquadrome back to normal. Even the marquee company remarked on the Monday when clearing up that they usually got soaked on at least one day at Ricky - last year they got soaked on both of the days they were working on site! The weather was absolutely perfect for the Festival and it just goes to show how much influence our Royal Family has with the Met Office. However looking at my lawn at the moment I am wondering when it is going to rain again but at least the water levels are OK in the canal at the moment after our very wet Easter.

Despite the two competing elements on Saturday the day was very busy and we actually collected more in donations on the first day. This is very unusual and Sunday is always a better day for people coming out to spend their money. However although the crowds did arrive, they seemed to have spent all their money celebrating on the Saturday and our traders reported that Sunday was not as busy for them. Our collectors also did not quite match what we achieved on the Saturday. However overall the event was very successful and we again raised over £35,000 to secure our education work until the next Festival. We also have a new building starting construction which may need some more funds so a good Festival was very important for the Trust!

We completed our wrap up meeting last week and as usual we discussed a large number of items which we want to improve on for next year. One area I want to ensure we address is the engagement of other organisations that capitalise on the event but do not provide us any help towards running the event. When Steve Mander and I called into the White Bear for lunch on the Monday when we were still clearing up (and totally knackered after the previous five days on site) it was a bit galling to hear one local chatting to the manager and asking if he had finished counting all the money he had taken at the weekend! We get fantastic support from many local businesses and organisations, and we want to partner with as many organisations as possible to ensure the event continues to be a part of the Rickmansworth community's calendar for years to come.

We had evidence that some traders are feeling the pinch at the moment but it is very business dependant. People are being more selective on where they spend their money and this may mean that some of the traders we regularly have may not be able to trade next year. We had minimal traders waiting for space this year which is different to the last few years. We did fill all the trade pitches and also had a great canal-side floating market. The Waterspace Team managed to moor 125 boats, which I think is a record, and I am sure we had to turn people away due to a lack of space.

We had one major milestone and that was John Brice standing down as Waterspace Manager after 25 years organising this part of the event. To mark this I presented John with an original watercolour of Roger going under Batchworth Bridge. The picture had been painted and very generously donated by Brian Morgan, a previous chairman of the Trust. I presented it to John

Rickmansworth Festival: 25 Years Contd. 1 of 3

from the top of the PA boat just before the final pull of the Tug of War on Sunday which was the best place for all John's friends and the boaters to see his amazing contribution recognised. John has been a pleasure to work with during my time running the Festival and I am pleased to say that he is not disappearing from the team. He is handing over the Waterspace Manager role to Phil Bassett, who has supported and volunteered with the Waterspace Team for many years. It is very reassuring to see a carefully planned transition in a very strong team and I know Phil will carry on John's legacy for many years. Ricky is now probably the premier boaters' Festival in the south of the country and this year I think we even had more boats than Canalway Cavalcade at Little Venice.

Phil Bassett and the Waterspace Team introduced for our 25th year an activity trail branded as "25 Years Young". The objective was to provide a passport booklet, which was sponsored by Batchworth Community Council, listing lots of activities for young people to try. The booklet had a map of where all the activities were and once they had participated the person could get a stamp in their passport. This brought together many local organisations who gave taster sessions of what their organisation offered with the hope more young people would become involved in their activities. Although at our debrief we had many things we would like to improve, the overall conclusion was that the new initiative had been very successful. We are now considering adding this as a regular part of the weekend and trying to expand the range of organisations and activities offered.

Many thanks are due to Janet Billing who took on both the trade and boat bookings this year. With Phil Bassett's technical help Janet has run the boat bookings using an electronic system. You may remember we tried this once before and it did not go totally smoothly however the new process worked very well. It is highly likely we will roll this out to the trade bookings as well for 2019 which will make the process much more automated and manageable.

I want to thank all of you who volunteered to collect donations this year; it is an absolutely vital contribution that you make to the Trust. No matter what we do in terms of signage it still does not get any easier and it is good when a local Councillor who helped us this year saw firsthand how challenging some members of our community can be when asked if they would like to make a donation! Chess Valley Rugby Club did sterling work managing the car park and had no issues this year. We had a great partnership between the Entertainment Team and the PA/Stage Team which resulted in an almost flawless experience for both our performers and the public. All the challenges I remember occurring in previous years seemed to have been worked through and the team delivered a fantastic line-up of entertainment which kept perfectly to time!

We had some changes on site due to the reduced weight limit on the bridge so we had to use skips to remove the rubbish. We got the number just right but the process needs to be looked at for next year to see if we can improve any elements. We still managed to hand back a very clean site to the Council after the weekend and while Steve Mander and myself were doing the final litter pick on the Monday it was good to have people come up to thank us for running the event. We changed the site build and get out arrangements and rather than trying to do as much as possible on the Sunday evening we actually

Rickmansworth Festival: 25 Years Contd. 2 of 3



Photo by Hannah Crick

took the stage and power infrastructure out on the Monday morning which worked very well and will be the plan for next year. We had great feedback on social media about how family-friendly the event was and we had many photos posted of the weekend, including some great shots of the Lancaster and Dakota from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight against the perfectly blue and cloudless sky.

We could not have run the Festival without great support from Three Rivers District Council, Batchworth Community Council and the Canal and River Trust. Many local businesses provided very generous support including Skanska, who gave staff volunteer days to help set up and dismantle the stage and power supplies. Travis Perkins supplied the Trackmats for under the stage and helped with site consumables such as line marking paint. Hetheringtons generously sponsored the main stage as our Platinum sponsor and local Building company Blenheim and DJC Sound Systems were gold sponsors. Other sponsors

Rickmansworth Festival: 25 Years Contd. 3 of 3

included Gibbs Gillespie, Investors Planning Associates Ltd, Robsons and Sunrise Senior Living.

We also could not have succeeded without all of you who volunteered to help run the Festival, either in the planning and organisation or over the weekend (or in many instances both!). Our charity is stretched to the limit to run the event but all our efforts are very worthwhile as it presents our charity to a very wide audience. When I meet people at the Lock Centre or in our local community and ask if they know about the Trust many people have probably not heard about our education work or our other activities at Batchworth. However they almost always know about Rickmansworth Festival. The Festival is very much the largest public face of the Trust and it shows what our organisation can achieve to a very wide audience and helps us attract many visitors back to Batchworth Lock throughout the year. So all your work and support for the Festival makes a real difference to how the Trust is perceived in the Rickmansworth Community.

We are always looking for more volunteers so if you would like to get involved in the overall organisation then please get back to me.

We will be starting to plan for our 2019 Festival in late September, following our debrief meeting, so if you would like to join the team or know of any others who would like to get involved please let me know.

David Montague



Education Centre: Building Begun

We now have sufficient funds to complete the building for our new Education Centre. All the hard work around the fundraising has been just part of the work going on to get us to this stage.

After much discussion amongst the trustees and also with the lawyer at Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) we have now finalised our lease for the site. We are also simultaneously arranging to transfer the land we briefly owned back into their name, which is where it should have been in the first place! I hope to sign all the documentation on behalf of the Trust around the time we start construction work.

You may have seen earlier in the year the tree work required on the site has been completed before the birds started to nest. Work was completed, not only on trees on our site, but Canal & River Trust (CRT) also paid for some work to be done on the trees impacting the workshop roof and those between the access ramp and the canal. The ones by the canal contained a lot of dead wood overhanging the pavement and highway and were also being strangled by ivy. Looking at them now they look much healthier and the remaining trees around the Little Union Canal site seem to have put on a growth spurt now that they have more space! Unfortunately we had to remove one additional tree by the river as when the contractor started to remove the ivy as planned he found a heartwood fungal infection which would have eventually killed the tree. We gained permission from TRDC to remove this tree before it died and fell on our new building! The company also had no issue getting rid of the timber as they had a queue of boaters waiting to collect logs as they were cutting it up!





After our structural engineer reviewed the ground survey results that I reported on in the last issue, we were advised that we need to have foundations which involved a mini piling system. This is going to take the form of steel pillars which will be inserted into the ground in a matrix (they basically drill a small diameter hole and back fill with concrete). A concrete slab will be formed on top of these piles and then second reinforced slab will be cast, with a void underneath for any flood water to flow through, and then the building will sit on the top slab. This is one of the first

Education Centre: Building Begun Contd.

things that will be done after the site is cleared so it should be interesting to watch!

Based on the foundations required we completed our review of building company quotes and construction options with several different contractors. After much discussion we have appointed Mark McDonald Construction as the main contractor for the building work and he will work with our building supplier, Keops. He will also oversee the other main contractor doing the foundation piling and will manage health and safety for the overall project. Mark McDonald has been very supportive of the Trust in doing whatever he could to keep his costs down and in line with our very tight budget and we are looking forward to working with his team on site.

We have been finalising all the minute details around the building with our architect and Keops to ensure the design meets our needs. Detailed loading calculations have been completed to enable the piling contractor to design the foundations and the building will now benefit from grey aluminium double glazed doors and windows. The plan originally was for these to be in wood which would have required painting and more maintenance so this is a real long term benefit for the Trust. We have also agreed to go for a fully insulated building which will have a second internal timber skin, an insulated cavity to the walls and a thicker level of roof insulation. This means not only will the building be cheaper to heat and suitable for year-round use but all the cabling and services can be hidden inside the wall structure. The final detailed changes to the plans, as well as samples of all the materials, have been submitted to the council.

We have completed the works application with the Environment Agency for working near the river Colne. I have had to switch from doing medical and Festival risk assessments to completing an Environmental Risk assessment as part of this process. The Third Party Works application to CRT has been updated with the final contractor information and after a site meeting with them planned in late June we should have all the permissions required in our planning approval to proceed with construction.

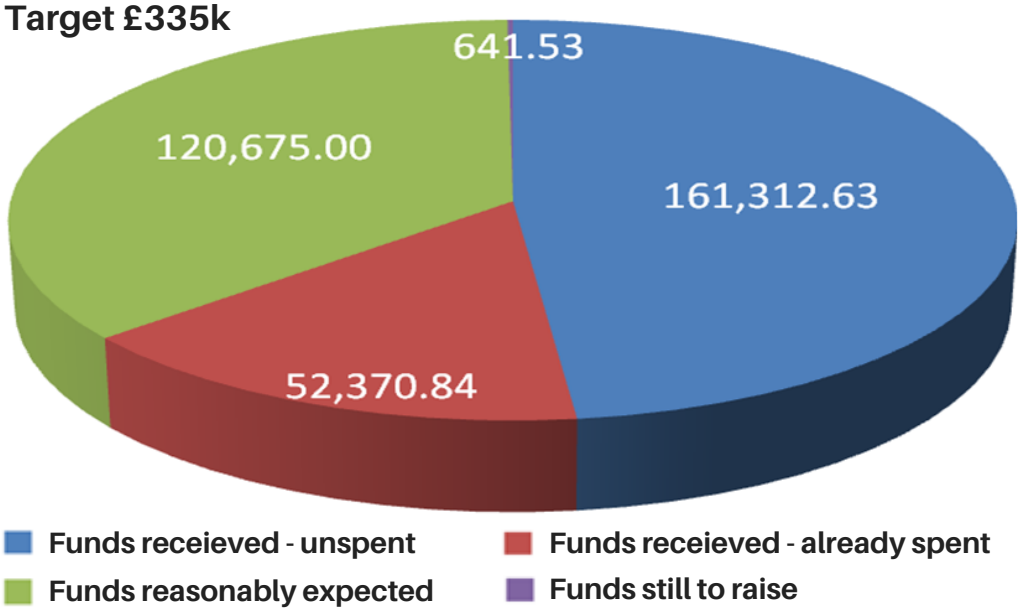
Mark Saxon has been helping me with the further utilities connection applications that we need. We already have the quotation from UK Power Networks for the electricity connection to the national grid. We have now applied to Affinity Water and to Thames Water for the fresh water and sewer connections. We now understand the original branch to the sewer that serviced the houses on the site originally is still there so we should be able to simply connect into this - much simpler and cheaper!

The start date for construction is July 2nd and we may see some preparations taking place on site before this. The project will take between 12 and 14 weeks and so by middle of October the building should be complete. The foundations work will take until the middle of August and then the building will be constructed in about two to three weeks and then the remaining time will be for finishing off the electrics, plumbing and other items.

So the next few weeks will see a lot of change at Batchworth as the "Batchworth Lock Education Centre at 101, Church Street" comes into being. We will have lots of opportunities for volunteers to help at various stages but the detailed planning of what we will need to do ourselves is still being worked out by the Building Team.

Education Centre Funding Update

Fundraising Status
Target £335k



Following the detailed ground survey results we obtained at the end of 2017, and once we had discussed this requirement with our contractors when reviewing estimates, we realised we would need significantly more than the £250k we originally thought to achieve our objectives. The board looked long and hard at the costs we were facing and asked a lot of searching questions, even asking if we should still continue with our plan for a building.

While continuing to fundraise we looked at all aspects of the building to decide if we could reduce costs and change the specification for the building to bring it into our original budget. Even with a minimal specification we realised the cost would still be well over £300k so we needed to accept this if we wanted to have a building. This was confirmed, so we set to work to finalise the budget based on the quotes coming in. We all agreed that maximising the use of the building was key, especially if we were spending this amount of money. We therefore agreed to invest an additional £23k on having a double skinned building with full insulation. We then looked at non-critical items we could remove from the budget and still proceed with the building to do these later in the programme. We therefore removed items such as the external decking and all non essential items of landscaping as well as equipping the building with furniture and shelving. This gave us a minimal budget to start construction of around £335k so we set our new target at that. It also does mean that Mark and Rob's request for green leather topped mahogany pedestal desks for their office did not make the cut...sorry guys.

We then looked at the funds we had and worked out how to bridge the gap. We also considered whether the Trust would be willing to take up offers of loans from individuals, but we decided this was not something the majority wanted to do so agreed we would only start the work when we had the funds. We realised we had a window of opportunity to complete the building in 2018 and go into 2019 with a fantastic new facility for Learning at the Lock and our other Education work. Not having a dedicated facility was seen as a real constraint on Rob's efforts to expand and develop our programmes. We also had a builder who could start in the summer.

After some extra efforts in late Spring we managed to find sufficient funds to reach our £335k target. This is an absolutely amazing result when you realise how much we have raised in such a short period of time down to the hard work of the fundraising team and the generosity of many people. Thank you for all your support and generosity, but you may have realised the work is not over yet. We have taken out about £40,000 in costs and deferred these as being able to be done after the building is complete. So we are still looking for further

Education Centre Funding Update Contd.

funds to allow us to complete these deferred parts of the project. The fundraising team continues to work hard to identify further sources of funding so if you have any further ideas pass them on.

So in summary we have done amazingly well in reaching our goal and achieving the significant milestone of getting sufficient funds to complete the building. Hopefully in the not too distant future we will be inviting people to the opening of our new Batchworth Lock Education Centre.

David

Idea for New Heritage Education Building: Heritage Study Centre

RWT is a Heritage Education Charity. We could establish a study centre, dedicated (but not necessarily limited) to waterways history and heritage, in stages. We already have permission to use some of the most relevant of the remarkable Robert Longden images from Sonia Rolt's book 'A Waterways People', and we'll have them on display, with interpretative captions, at A2, perhaps even A1 size, to support our present Learning at the Lock programme. We could also move all our waterways reference books, now in a corner of the Canal Centre, into the Education Building, with a desk to allow people to refer to them. We'll have wi-fi internet access anyway, and can provide at least one terminal for students, and we're talking to the National Waterways Archive about how we might connect to their on-line resources – they're interested in working with competent out-stations such as RWT,and we're already involved with them in the Waterways Heritage Network. And we can display a number of artefacts, relevant also to Learning at the Lock and to the Roger, to illustrate the heritage and history of the waterways.

We could develop also therelationship we already have with the Three Rivers Museum and Rickmansworth Historical Society, and we could use the University of Hertfordshire's Heritage Hub: all these and more have expertise and material whic could contribute to a really strong 'study centre' at Batchworth. But there is more: we're in touch with a local group who specialise in Virtual Reality presentation for education, and there is grant funding available for suitable projects. It's very early days for this, but the prospects are very exciting if we can develop them properly.

The early stages of all this are simple enough, and are already in hand – they'll support Learning at the Lock anyway. There's a great deal to be done to develop the rest, including working out whether there's a demand or need for it, how we manage it and make it available to thepublic, and how we make it pay for itself. But the prospects for using our new building to do some really new work as a 'Heritage Education Charity' are attractive and exciting: watch this space!

Fabian Hiscock

Rickmansworth's WW1 Waterways

Part 1

Everyone knows the waterways came to a crashing halt in the winter of 1962/3, having been in some decline since the second World War under pressure from the railways. Actually, the waterways' decline was a much more complicated picture, and it started to cause concern at the start of the twentieth century. It accelerated during the First World War, affecting Rickmansworth as much as anywhere. The pre-eminent social historian of the waterways, Dr Wendy Freer, has described perfectly in her 1995 book 'The Women and Children of the Cut' what happened to our own waterways across the country, and in the second part of this article we will see in more detail what happened in Rickmansworth.

By the outbreak of war in 1914 the great days of the canals as the facilitators and arteries of industrial growth and social change were already over. The speed, volume, coherence and certainty of rail transport were irresistible by a network which is, even now, often seen as a system, but actually never was: the canal owners and the carrying companies, and importantly the people who made it all work, had been up against it for some years. A Royal Commission had been considering the future of Britain's inland waterways from 1906 to 1910, but its recommendations had been set aside in 1910 in favour of more pressing political problems. So even before 1914 the whole structure and all its people were already in trouble. As war approached trade was already declining, and there was a steady trickle of people leaving the canals for better paid, less arduous work ashore.

Let's think about the sort of people we're talking about. There are two groups: those who worked on the canal itself, static and with familiar jobs, and those who worked the boats, mainly but not only itinerant and part of a closed and very little known community of its own. The first group worked for the canal companies such as the Grand Junction serving London from the north and passing through Watford and Rickmansworth, while the second worked for the carriers large and small – Fellows Morton and Clayton, the Samuel Barlow Coal Company, LB Faulkner, Harry King, Thomas Clayton – with even the owner-boatmen so prominent in this area usually sub-contracting from those bigger outfits.

The long-distance boatman, who will have been very familiar in and with Rickmansworth, typically had, and had had for 80 years, his home and his family in his boats, still almost entirely horse boats, and was truly 'itinerant'. He carried at no notice a huge range of raw materials from mines and ports to factories and farms, and manufactured goods from mills and factories to other plants, to town and city markets and to ports, and a great deal of this trade headed to and from London on the Grand Junction Canal. Because he was competing with the railways he did this under huge time pressure and for very small wages and used skills applicable almost nowhere else but arcane enough to resist incomers very effectively even if the social structure had made them welcome – which it didn't. The long-distance boating 'community' numbered about 10,000 people across the country, largely remote from the general population and in a world which extended very little past the hedge or wall on either side of the canal and the towpath on which they walked, daily and often for decades and unseen by anyone outside. The small settlement serving them at Batchworth will have been unremarked by most

Rickmansworth's WW1 Waterways

Part 1 Continued.

Rickmansworth people. And it was that community which was draining steadily away as war broke out.

One of the main priorities of the government at the outbreak was to gain control of the most important sectors of industry in order to maximise efficient use of labour and material resources to support the war effort, and that included immediate control of the railways. Canals were considered no longer of sufficient importance, and at first they were left alone. By January 1915 there were already reports of a shortage of boatmen, and canal company staff were also being called up. A recruitment campaign, quite unprecedented, was launched by the large midlands carrier Thomas Clayton in November 1915.

The crewing of some canal craft was a ‘reserved’ occupation from August 1915, but only as it affected the transport of munitions and fuel to power stations and gas works: so not all boatmen were ‘starred’. Then the Military Service Act of early 1916 abolished ‘reserved occupations’ and required those to be exempted from conscription to apply for a certificate. But while the presumption was that boatmen would beexempted they still had to apply, even if already in a reserved status: that was a considerable problem for a largely illiterate and in any case itinerant workforce, often self-employed and so without an ‘employer’ to do the paperwork for them. Even when a case got to a tribunal, there was no understanding (or at least no sympathy) of how the boatman’s profession worked, so when for example the son of an elderly boatman, the ‘mate’ of his boat or the captain of his second boat, was applying for exemption it was often suggested that a discharged soldier be recruited instead. The real difficulty and extraordinary levels of skill needed to operate a horse boat on, for example, the Rivers Thames, Trent or Severn almost always escaped the Tribunal, and needed very careful explanation – often unsuccessfully. Many men were therefore conscripted whose occupation should have exempted them, and canal traffic declined yet further.

This, of course, didn’t apply only to the boatman. The work force operating and maintaining the canal also suffered, with toll offices closed, maintenance and repairs not done, boats neglected and not built, and the processing of orders delayed. Between 1914 and 1917 the canal companies alone lost about 3,000 men to the armed services, and the carriers a large but unquantifiable number of boatmen: it’s been estimated that the total available manpower declined by about 50%. So there was at the same time disruption of the traffic, obstruction of the waterways themselves, declining numbers of people able to keep the traffic moving, and enhanced competition from the financially-supported railways.

The wartime position of people working on the waterways nationally was not good. In the next issue of Independence we will see what the effect this had on the canal round here, and the local companies which used them.

Fabian Hiscock

Tree Work on the River Chess

You may have noticed the River Chess behind the Lock Centre looks slightly different? Over the last few years Mark and other volunteers have fought a battle to keep the river from clogging up with trees. Well finally the Environment Agency has taken action and you may be able to spot the difference!

You can even see the exit for the Mill race of the old Water Mill which used to be just above the weir. We will wait to see what further tree work is done when they start work on the hotel on the Travis Perkins site.



Before



After



View from the Canal garden showing the Mill race exit

Volunteering Fun at the Canal Centre

The excellent chart showing volunteering opportunities that Steve sends out weekly revealed a couple of blank spaces in the Lock Centre calendar. I decided that it would be a useful thing to learn. David H on a Wednesday afternoon was a very amusing teacher. He referred to me as his 'beautiful assistant' which was rather gratifying. However, I became 'the trainee' when I couldn't answer visitors' questions. I was acutely embarrassed to ring up £1001 on the till for a £1 can of drink. That took some sorting out!

There is some very exciting stock for people to purchase in the Centre. RWT provides quite a service in the Rickmansworth area. When my husband and I took our turn, we managed to open up without setting off alarms. Then we discovered what a social hub the Canal Centre is. Boaters collect their mail there and come in for a chat. We managed to track a parcel that was expected and hadn't turned up. The boater was happy to be reassured that the parcel was on its way.

Most visitors were buying ice creams and drinks. The stocks are miraculously replenished by other volunteers. A mother and young daughter were told about Learning at the Lock – maybe that school will visit now. They hope to book the Pride for a party so we explained how to do this. We fielded phone calls, recorded visitor numbers and eventually mastered the till. (Luckily Mark was in the vicinity when I struggled. He explained to visitors that we YTS candidates were not up to the usual standard!)

Yet again, I am impressed at the work that RWT does in so many ways, the vibrant Lock Centre being an extremely valuable part of what we offer.

All in all, we had an entertaining time, and there was no time to do the crossword.

A trustee

Don't ignore it, report it!

Environment Agency

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.

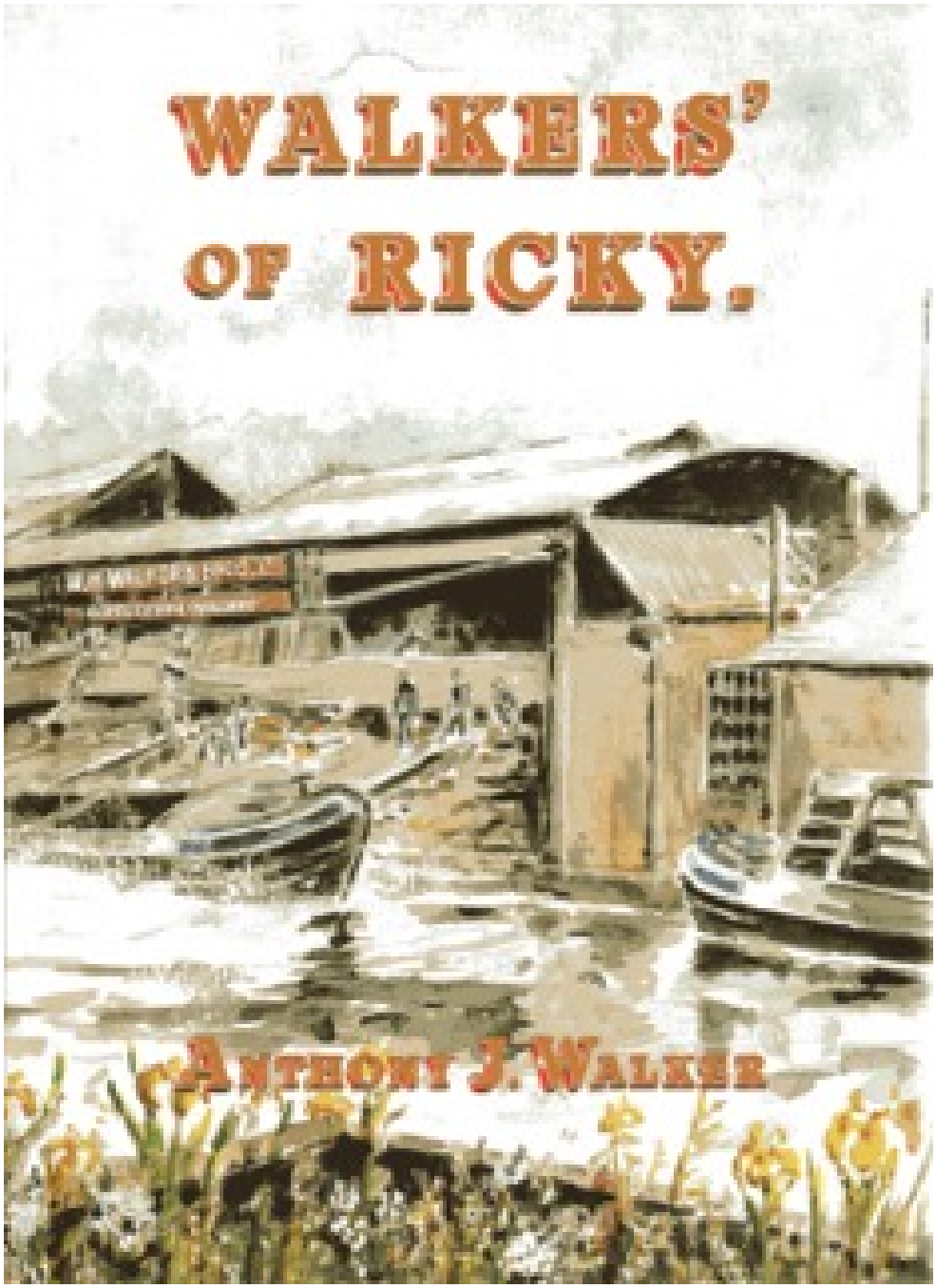
Walkers' of Ricky by Anthony Walker

Readers may like to know that we have copies of Anthony J Walkers book, ‘Walkers’ of Ricky,’ for sale from the Batchworth Lock Canal Centre. This book is now out of print and will not be reprinted.

Due to the generosity of the Walker family, we have obtained the remaining copies of this unique book,and are pleased to be able to sell them at £12 per copy.

Below is a short piece about the book by Fabian Hiscock.

‘Walkers of Ricky is far more than the story of a local company. It’s a vital element of both the social and the economic history of Rickmansworth in the twentieth century, but it’s more even than that. It describes how the wooden boats were built and repaired, what they were used for and where they fitted into the working waterways of England – and how the decline of the waterways in the 1960s affected the business. In writing his account Tony Walker took advice and expertise from some resounding names as well – Edward Paget Tomlinson and Alan Faulkner both contributed text and Paget Tomlinson outstanding drawings of the boats and works – the result is quite outstanding. If you have any interest in the history of Rickmansworth or of the waterways, in the operation of a timber and builder’s yard and coal business or in the building of wooden boats, you really should have a copy of Walkers of Ricky.’



Caught on Camera!

In between issues of Batchworth Telegraph we always accumulate a few photos of our volunteers and others in action around and about Batchworth. If you do not wish to have your photo published please fill in the simple 57 page form which Mark keeps hidden safely in the Lock Centre!

The first shows Terry giving up hope of finding something edible for his supper in the canal just below Batchworth Lock. Probably will be the White Bear for supper again....



It is not widely known but as part of Mark's qualification as a fully accredited NCBA trainer he is able to provide surfing lessons. If you would like to apply please contact Mark, he has all the right equipment as you can see. You could also ask Sadie if she felt surfing over the Chess Weir was good training for her planned summer holiday in the West Country!





You may have noticed that some of the mallards around the Lock Centre this year are missing some of the white highlights on the end of their tail and wing feathers. Being very keen ornithologists Terry and Marie are trying to re-touch the missing colouration on these unfortunate birds as they fly under Batchworth Bridge. The paint being used has of course been approved by the RSPB!



Upcoming Events

December 2018, exact date TBD – **Canal side Carols at Batchworth**

Saturday 4th–Monday 6th May 2019 – **Canalway Cavalcade, Little Venice**

Saturday 18th–Sunday 19th May 2019 – **Rickmansworth Festival**

June 2019, exact date TBD – **Braunston Historic Boat Gathering**

Please look out for other events at Batchworth Lock throughout the year and refer to rwt.org.uk for further information on these and other events.

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