



The Batchworth Telegraph

Newsletter of the Friends, Summer 2021

Roger's Got New Harvey-Taylor Cloths!

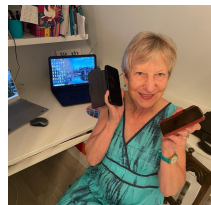


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Stands In



New
Seating



Mark and
Terry on
Tour





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Chairman's Chat...



Welcome to the summer issue of the Batchworth Telegraph for 2021, a year which, so far, has not been much better than the majority of 2020! By the time you read this, we hope that all the work done by the NHS to roll out the vaccine programme will have resulted in a further relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions.

Although much more slowly than we hoped when I wrote to you at the end of 2020, things are starting to happen down at Batchworth Lock. Rob and our volunteers have hosted several schools at Learning at the Lock, including a few new schools, which meant that the end of the summer term was quite busy. Rob and our amazing volunteers have worked really hard to put in place new procedures backed up by risk assessments to ensure all aspects of the day can proceed safely. The schools that have been so far have given Rob excellent feedback, especially around the improved facilities for having their picnic lunch in fine weather on the Education Centre decking. We look forward to welcoming more schools in the autumn when we hope the protocols required will be simpler, and we look forward to a more normal year in 2022.

We have started to take back our regular hirers for the Education Centre, following the COVID-19 safety procedures. These restrict numbers, and we cannot do all that we could before, but it is great to see the building being used more widely again after the last 15 months.

The Batchworth Lock Canal

centre is busy again with great quantities of ice cream being consumed when the sun shines and the summer rain stops! Our phone booking system for running the trip boats is working well, and Jillian has started booking charters, with some restrictions on groups in place, so the Pride of Batchworth has been busy. Our essential boater's postal service will move back onto a more normal footing this month, and we are requesting deliveries return to letters and small packages. During lockdown we took in large numbers of parcel deliveries (including a fridge!), and when we remove restrictions on visitors in the Lock Centre we will need the space back!

Roger now possesses a new set of very smart Harvey Taylor livery top cloths. We also hope to take Roger to a few small events later in the summer. We may even have some events at Batchworth, which Mark mentions in his report. These are all in the planning stage at the moment, but we hope to see these come to fruition. We have also completed the replacement of the old Perspex roof panels on Pride with steel so the boat looks much smarter and, more importantly, does not leak! Mark and our volunteers will continue to carefully look after Pride as it has to serve us well until the trip boat replacement project concludes.

We continue to function well as a Trust. Following an

Chairman's Chat Continued...

analysis of our cash flow and vulnerabilities, we understand exactly the level of stress our finances can take. We obtained further government grants at the start of 2021, based on the business rates we pay for our two premises, and a restart grant via Three Rivers District Council. The grants received since the start of the pandemic, including the COVID Heritage Recovery Grant administered by the Heritage Lottery Fund, have made a material difference to our viability as a charity. Without these, Mark voluntarily reducing his hours, and the furlough scheme, the trustees would have had to make some very difficult decisions. We also have many supporters and friends who make donations to the Trust on a regular basis, including monthly. As a result of all this support, the trustees are confident that we have the funds to carry us through to the 2022 financial year.

So far it has not been the year we expected, but things are improving, and I hope all our volunteers and supporters are looking forward to coming back to Batchworth. While we had to change our plans for our AGM and hold it on Zoom, I hope to see you at a Trust function or social event soon.

Best regards and keep safe,

David

Mark Reports



With the sun shining, boat trips full, the Education Centre being used and the shop full of customers, who would have thought we've just been through such a troubling, historic time.

There is an air of 'normality' returning to our operations albeit always with a cautious note.

However, whatever happens, I'd just like to pass on my thanks and respect to all of you, our volunteers, friends and supporters, who have supported our efforts to restart our activities over the last few weeks.

I'm pleased to say the lock centre has been fully staffed since we reopened on the 12th April, our short ferry trips have recommenced, albeit with reduced numbers, some Charters have taken place, and the Education Centre is now being used by a number of outside organisations.

To those of you waiting to resume your boat training, I can let you know that we restarted training from the beginning of July.

We were delighted to be able to assist the former Chair of the Trust, Brian Morgan whose granddaughter recently got married and asked if we could transport her guests from Batchworth to Stockers Lock by boat. Both the *Pride & Roger* look resplendent as the guests arrived to enjoy some fizz on their way down and Fabian got dressed up in period costume to add that little bit of authenticity.

There are a couple of events planned for Batchworth over the coming months that you may want to put in your diaries and tell your friends and neighbours about. Firstly, theatre boat, Widgeon, is planning to moor alongside 'Roger' over the weekend Friday 20th August to Sunday 22nd August to perform shows on the opposite towpath. We are providing some assistance in getting the grass arena prepared, and we hope to keep the lock centre open for their evening performances, which are all family friendly shows. Performance times are: 7.30pm- 9.30pm Friday 20th August, 3pm-5pm & 7.30pm-9.30pm Saturday 21st August, and 2.30pm – 4.30pm & 6.30pm -8pm Sunday 22nd August. More details to follow.

Between the 17th & 19th September, Waterways Art Collective hope to hold a mini arts festival based around Batchworth Lock. Music, poetry, dance and comedy are just some of the acts planned, and we hope to have a gazebo or two outside the workshop and make use of the Education Centre. Again, more details to follow, but your support for both these events would be greatly appreciated.

My most heartfelt thanks to all those who are stepping up and taking on a little more responsibility whilst I'm away.

Catch you all soon,

Mark

Rob Reports



Glimpses of what life might be like after the pandemic are beginning to emerge - let us hope this is not a false dawn. Now I am retired I can only imagine what life has been like for teachers, pupils and ancillary staff in schools. Instinct tells me that most would be simply trying to keep up their work and wait for better days ahead. When the promise from the government comes to open up society, would teachers have the confidence to book school outings? Would volunteers have the confidence to come to Learning at the Lock sessions? Would the promise of freedom actually happen?

Luckily some of the questions have been answered. Schools have been booking sessions and volunteers have been coming forward to help. Learning at the Lock was set to open on 21st June, which is near the end of many schools' terms. The Education Centre has been booked for outside users and so the number of school bookings will be limited anyway. Many schools finish in the middle of July, so there were not a large number of dates available. Although a pandemic may be happening, the Trust does have bills to pay, so using the asset of the Education Centre has to be a priority. Learning at the Lock can really only operate in summer and early autumn. The outside bookings can go on for the whole year.

At the time of writing this

article, seven confirmed bookings have been made. Usually, if a school makes an enquiry it results in a booking. A good number of schools did make enquiries this time but did not go any further, which shows that there was still some hesitancy. The good news is that many schools can walk to the Education Centre, and we have been able to make connections with some local schools that have not visited us since I have been the Education Programme Manager. Not only have the schools responded well but all the volunteer roles have been filled. Our facilities and structure make the school feel safe. There is a rigorous cleaning regime, our centre is spacious and sanitisers are available. Most of the activities take place outside and only one class from one school is booked in at a time.

During the lockdown, Learning at the Lock was awarded recognition from the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, whose badge is proudly displayed by the main entrance to the Education Centre. Guided by David, Pam and Mike, and with advice from Fabian, I worked through the requirements for the award. The new initiatives include an update of the Volunteer Handbook, volunteer meetings, plus feedback from schools and children. I will also need to see as many of the volunteers in their roles as I can. The award gives schools the confidence to know that our programme is following nationally recognised criteria. We can be confident that we really

are offering a first-class service.

It has been a long time since a Learning at the Lock session has run. So, with this in mind, I arranged a Refresher Day on 23rd June. Apart from educating the children who come to visit us, I hope that being a volunteer for Learning at the Lock will be a chance to meet with other people and feel part of a team. The Refresher Day was a chance to meet old friends and reacquaint with other volunteers. Please encourage any other person that you know to be part of our volunteering group.

I look forward to seeing and working with you all again soon.

Rob Moore

Festival 2021

When I last talked to you, we had hoped to run a Festival in May 2021; however, as you know, the status of the pandemic meant we had to cancel for the second year running. This was a major blow to the Trust, the Festival Team and for many other event organisers across the country that had to make

similar decisions - so we are not alone!

We had started to do some very early bookings for site infrastructure and had the trade and boat booking online process all ready to go. We took the decision in late December to delay the start of bookings for a month, as we did not want all the work of providing refunds as we did with the 2020 Festival.

However, by about the third week in January, it was clear the event

would not be possible, so the cancellation decision was made.

We have already set the date of May 21st and 22nd for 2022, and I know the Festival Team will rise to the challenge of staging an extra special event for our community. We will start our planning cycle in September, hoping for third time lucky!

David Montague

Pike!

I recently decided to fish the bottom of the weir in the canal centre garden again.

Previously, I had fished here when the river and canal were high and there was a strong flow.

On that occasion I had many fish - almost one per cast - ranging from roach and perch plus two bream of a decent size, using maggots and baiting with breadcrumb, so I thought I'd have another go.

Terry, another volunteer, was there as well watching to see how it went. I had regular

bites resulting in small roach, and every now and then as I was bringing in the fish a great swirl erupted as a pike tried to take them.

This happened a few times, and, though the pike never managed to get the small fish, I think it was his presence that put off the other fish, as I was not being as successful as the last trip.

The pike tried again but this time hooked himself charging downstream and then back to the weir, then back downstream again. Up and down he went, while I hoped the line didn't snap. I managed to tire him and Terry netted him.

Pike have very sharp teeth, and this can cut the line, but luckily the hook hold was just on the outside of his jaws. Beryl was on duty in the Canal Centre so I showed her the fish before he was returned to the water, though not where he was caught, but in the canal near the Pride's mooring.

I continued to fish, however the disturbance meant very few fish were caught afterwards.

Next time who knows!

Martin Stokes



Pam Steps Into the Breach

I usually like to contribute to the Batchworth Telegraph, but this time my muse had departed, along with Mark for his break and David for his holiday. I felt sure that I'd think of something before they came back. Little did I know that Chris B would sustain a nasty injury to her hand and wrist, and she was supposed to be in charge of RWT during the absence of our Manager and Chairman. David rang me to ask if I would step in! Gosh! I was flattered. I needed a challenge.

There was a quick teach-in to learn how to operate RWT's laptop and mobile phone. I set

up my office and felt important. As a teacher, I had never worked in an office.

My husband said that when he worked in London, a tea lady came round with a trolley. So he kept me supplied with cups of tea. I answered emails, fielded phone calls and attempted to master Hallmaster for renting out the Education Centre. I sent out begging requests to Skippers and they replied, some by return, to fill spaces in rotas. RWT volunteers are so responsive. I felt powerful. I assured Chris that she needn't take the devices as I was enjoying myself, but since her arm had started to heal, I had to relinquish them. That proved to be lucky for me, as she then had to deal with thorny problems for the Trust.

I had had fun, and found something to write about!

Pam Paterson (Trustee)



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.

Trip boat replacement project update

Work has been continuing to finalise the supplier we will go with for our new all electric trip boat to replace the Pride of Batchworth. Whilst we have not been able to go and visit both examples of boats and suppliers during the recent lockdowns, we have continued to narrow down the possible boat builders.

After further review of our list of identified suppliers we have

now narrowed down to just two companies.

The first is Ortomarine who are the builders of the all electric trip boat the Pamela May 2. They are quite a small builder and, due to their experience with building electric boats, have a very full order book and a long waiting list. On my recent holiday on the canals, I did see two Ortomarine electric boats cruising the network, both in private ownership, so the electric revolution is well and truly underway!

The second supplier is Colecraft, who are possibly one of the largest steel canal boat builders in the UK. They have recently delivered an all electric trip boat which is going into service with the Bedford and Milton Keynes

Waterways Trust.

I also passed this very smart looking boat on my travels and the team have arranged to take a trip on Electra very shortly. The advantage with Colecraft is they have a much larger production capacity and hence much shorter waiting lists.

Once we have visited the boats made by the two shortlisted suppliers, the team will make a decision on the company and pay a deposit to reserve a build slot. We then just have to raise the remaining money to complete the project and start building!

David

All Change with Roger

You may have noticed that Roger is looking very smart with a new set of Harvey-Taylor cloths. Several new cloths were obtained to replace some that were unfortunately stolen, and the stencil lettering was obtained

for the complete set of cloths. The result is that Roger is now looking much more how it looked when originally in service with Harvey-Taylor, based on the photographic evidence we have.

We cannot wait to be able to display Roger at events in the near future with the new display boards produced by Fabian.

In the meantime, Roger is back in

use as a key part of our Learning at the Lock programme. My thanks go to Fabian and Pat for all their work in preparing and maintaining the cabin, as well as Fabian, Clive, Martin and many others for all their work on ensuring our key heritage asset remains conserved in a good working condition – a continuing challenge!



The Workshop

The workshop opposite the Canal Centre is shared with the Canal and River Trust; however, they have not used it regularly for some years. Several years ago they cleared out canal lock fittings and other ironmongery and moved these to other locations so we have more space.

We have rearranged the leftover workbench and cupboards, and, before we started using it regularly, a kitchen worktop was fitted on the right-hand side with cupboards underneath and a sink.

We use cardboard, etc., to protect this and use it as a workbench for repairing, fabricating, painting and general woodwork jobs. The leftover wood from the building of our Education Centre is often used in many projects, plus other scrap bits are collected as they always come in useful. Some wood, as well as tools, nuts, bolts, boxes of screws, and other useful fittings, are also often donated by RWT supporters and volunteers. This year some lovely tongue and groove ash floorboards were donated by one of our volunteers and a bench grinder was donated, which is used to sharpen various tools. A drill sharpening kit and a mitre saw were also donated by others. All electrical items donated are PAT tested (Portable Appliance Test) before use.

Although COVID-19 held up

some of our planned work, we were still able to paint and carry on with some jobs when allowed. Items made this year include a new rear door and sliding hatch for The Pride of Batchworth. Some items/jobs are also done for our volunteers, as well as helping them with some of their DIY jobs.

This year a pair of bird boxes was made for one of our volunteers. Our bird boxes located around Batchworth were checked over and painted ready for the following year, however, sadly, several dead chicks were found in ours this year. If you want to look out for them, our boxes are positioned to the left of the road bridge as you head towards Tesco on the Education Centre side and in a tree opposite the Education Centre next to the roadway down to the workshop.

Though Pride's rear door had some repairs some 10 years ago, it was in need of replacing. Rot around the porthole was cut out and large gaps were repaired in its fitting. The sliding roof had always been difficult for skippers and crews to open in the winter months: the wood was plywood and would swell up, and, although a large handle was fitted inside underneath the hatch, it still caused difficulty in opening and closing, so a replacement was long overdue. The donated ash floorboards were used for both of these projects. The hole in the door for the porthole was deemed unnecessary, but the brass porthole and glass were refitted to the external face of the door.

The ability to have the workshop space, volunteers, skills and tools makes us very self-sufficient in maintenance, especially for

our two boats. Having the workshop also gives us room for storing Rogers' ballast, bottom boards (shutts) and planks, etc., when removed for docking, and the space allows volunteers an area to paint the planks and boards while not being used on Roger. Although, when the contents of Roger are in the workshop, it does restrict some space and access!

To be able to keep the Batchworth Lock area maintained, garden tools are kept in the workshop for grass cutting, leaf clearing, and strimming, as well as cutting back trees and other plant growth along the canal, especially the willows that hang down in to the path of travelling boats.

So if you see the workshop doors open, pop over or call in to see what might be happening. If you have any spare time you could help with painting or assisting in many of the projects that go on in there!

New Seating!

Early this year we were extremely fortunate to receive a very generous donation of £4,000 from a friend of Rob Moore, our Education Programme Manager. The trustees decided this should

be spent on improving the experience for our visitors at Batchworth. We have therefore purchased and installed 10 picnic benches made from recycled PET bottles with 5 installed on the decking at the rear of the Education Centre and 5 to replace our ageing tables and chairs in the garden beside the Lock Centre. One of the tables at each location is also

wheelchair accessible. The benefit of these tables is that they will last for many years and will not need any maintenance.

We have already had excellent feedback from the schools visiting Learning at the Lock who love the much improved facilities for eating their picnic lunches!



Mark and Terry on tour!

Many of you will know that Mark took an extended period of leave during most of June and early July. It has always been a challenge to get Mark to take annual leave, and, finally, he set up a trip with Terry accompanying him on his own boat. They planned to do the Leicester Ring and enjoy some real, long-distance boating for about three weeks. Chris Burridge and Pam Paterson looked after the Trust's mobile phone and laptop, complete with managing all the enquiry emails, and we assembled a rota of people to look after various aspects of the management of Batchworth while Mark was away. Also our fabulous volunteers stepped

up to take ownership of many routine tasks to ensure all ran smoothly. Thank you to everyone who helped out and ensured Mark could take a well-earned break! Whilst all detailed reports of what took place remain subject to the

official secrets act (files will be released in 50 years' time), a few snippets of information did escape.

We did get a picture of Mark and Terry all packed and ready to leave!



We also saw what happened when Mark made an attempt

to mimic Mary Poppins at Friars Mill in Leicester.



Finally I have been assured that the stoppage on the Watford Staircase locks shortly after Mark and Terry

navigated them had nothing to do with our two intrepid explorers.

Glad you enjoyed your holiday and welcome back!

David Montague

Photo Caption Contest!

As usual anyone conducting themselves in an inappropriate manner around Batchworth (or anywhere else in the country now!) is likely to be captured in compromising positions. Here are a few of the most recent snaps!

Firstly, unusual boating



We think the above photo is either the initial trials at Batchworth in preparation for RWT's own re-enactment of the

activities at Batchworth:

Kontiki Raft expedition across the Pacific Ocean, or this could be related to the filming of the safety videos required when Ikea start delivery of flat packs to boaters - Stuntman Arthur Sedrington is seen in a still from Part 4. How not to get on your Delivery pontoon.

We have had a couple of suggestions for this photo on the left, including "finding your sea legs after lockdown" - volunteer forgets that when feeling seasick the objective is to expel your stomach contents outside the boat, and new volunteer, Ben Dover, getting ready to receive the RWT-administered Covid vaccine!



Finally, a photo that we published last time provided a couple of witty responses!

1. Rumours are confirmed with photographic evidence that the punishment for bumping The Pride when returning to Batchworth is lying with your head in the Bilge/Toilet tank area for 15 minutes.
2. The search for a big mouse (as big as a squirrel) spotted by one of the lady skippers continues.





Upcoming Events

Saturday 31st July–Sunday 1st August – **Roger attending
Denham Country Park Festival**

Friday 20th August–Sunday 22nd August – **Theatre Boat
Widgeon at Batchworth**

Friday 17th–Sunday 19th September – **Waterways Art Collective
mini arts festival at Batchworth**

Saturday 4th December - **Canalside Carols at Batchworth**

February 2022 (exact date TBD) - **RWT Ceilidh**

Saturday 30th April–Monday 2nd May - **Roger at Little Venice**

Saturday 21st–Sunday 22nd May - **Rickmansworth Festival**

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