Rickmansworth Waterways Trust
The home of canals, education and enviroment



The Batchworth Telegraph

Newsletter of the Friends, Winter 2019

Children Enjoying the New Education Centre!



Inside

Our Chairman Speaks...



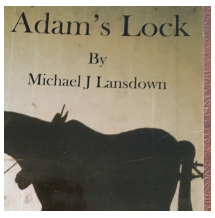
High Sheriff visits



A Fishy Tail



RWT Book Reviews



The Missing Link



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Chairman's Chat...

Welcome to the end of year issue of the Batchworth Telegraph for 2019, the twice yearly magazine from Rickmansworth Waterways Trust (RWT). We finished 2018 with a mammoth volunteering effort to get the new Education Centre ready to open and re-start Learning at the Lock in its new home. At the end of 2019 we can look back and see what the culmination of the last three years of hard work have been about – the first year of full use of our new building. 2019 was a very different year to 2018 as, rather than constructing the building we have been able focus on growing what we do in terms of education work.

Rob hosted 30 Learning at the Lock visits in 2019, which is considerably more than in 2018. The new facilities have clearly communicated that we are very much "open for business" after the negative impression losing our classroom gave to schools. The children and teachers love the centre and Rob is clearly getting the message across that schools need to book early to ensure they can get their preferred dates. At time of writing we have already confirmed 16 bookings for 2020, which is many more than we have ever had before at this time of year: our experience is that schools start their planning in the spring term. Rob and the trustees are hoping for a really bumper year in 2020, now that the centre is gaining more interest from schools, so keep looking out for the call-to-volunteer emails and offer to help Rob when you can.

We have started to do adult education visits in the Education Centre and want to do many more of these. We can accommodate them at any time of year and at times when schools do not usually attend. Mark's efforts to promote the Education Centre as a venue for other community groups to make use of are certainly working. We only started opening up to external bookings in July and our first official engagement was for the Rickmansworth Folk Festival. Since then many other groups have made use of the Centre.

We have regular programmes of art classes, both during the evening and multi-day workshops. We have regular bookings from the Inclusion Project who host activity days for young adults with learning difficulties. We have even hosted the Three Rivers District Council planning department on a training session for their team! These are some examples of usage on top of Learning at the Lock and other trust meetings. Internal

Chairman's Chat Continued

Trust users need to ensure they check the Hall Master booking system as you cannot assume the building will be free and more likely than not it could be in use! It is good to see that our building is gaining wider use, and this is exactly what we hoped for when designing and planning the new Centre. Even though we have only been letting out the building for less than six months, it is clear that the income from hire is likely to cover the costs of running the building, which means we can focus our resources on improving our educational offerings.

As many of you know, our treasurer, Kay Fearn, has stood down from her financial duties with the Trust. Kay has been an amazing asset to the trustees with her professional experience, and she provided the trustees with invaluable financial information when fundraising for our new building. She also helped us understand our cash flow and worked closely with our Finance Director, so Tina could effectively plan our annual budgets and prepare our annual accounts. Kay worked with Tina to introduce us to electronic banking and now just about all our transactions are paperless and our understanding of our day-to-day finances has never been better. Fortunately we have a very capable successor in Nik Bennett who is now fully up-to-speed as our new treasurer. Kay and Nik ran a three month transition period so Nik could get used to the bookkeeping systems Kay had set up. We wish Nik a warm welcome to the Trust and hope he enjoys his new volunteering role. Kay is not disappearing and will still be volunteering with RWT – she has plans to help at the Festival in 2020.

Roger had a successful trip up to the Cosgrove Festival on the 20th and 21st July and gave more volunteers boating experience on the way. The Festival was very different to our regular outing to Little Venice each May, and we hope to go again next year and combine the trip with Leighton Buzzard and Fenny Stratford Festivals on the subsequent weekends. We are also getting some A-Frame display boards made up to tell the story of Roger and the restoration. This is thanks to the expertise of Fabian Hiscock in telling Roger's story and to Phil Bassett for the desktop publishing work. These will provide a much better source of information to our visitors when displaying Roger next year. Fabian is also now receiving further expert help with the maintenance of Roger and its Lister JP2 engine. Clive Pelerin has shown himself to be a knowledgeable enthusiast and has offered some new insights into looking after our unique boat.

So another successful year draws to a close, only achieved by excellent support from all our volunteers led by Mark and Rob. You have helped run the Festival, host Learning at the Lock, run charters and ferry trips, operated the Lock Centre and ensured our boats and the Batchworth area are well looked after. There are so many aspects of our work, and it never ceases to amaze me what a fantastic team of volunteers we have and how well everyone gets on with each other. I hope you enjoyed Christmas and are looking forward, as I am, to another successful year in 2020.

Best regards,

David



Mark Reports

As I write this article, the Christmas lights are twinkling on the bridge and Lock Centre at Batchworth, and the lights and their reflections in the water remind me of stars... This leads me onto my first big thank you to everyone who has joined in and contributed so much over the previous year, ensuring the Trust maintains its position as one of the leading charities in Rickmansworth and the surrounding area. The backbone of any organisation is its personnel, whether they be paid or voluntary, and it is a real honour for me to manage the great group of people who undertake the vast array of duties that make up the Trust. Some are easier to manage than others, but just like the lights over Batchworth, you are all stars. We continue to attract some really fine recruits to our ranks, and I am sure this will continue. As many of you know, once you shake my hand and accept the gift(!) of the polo shirt, your life changes forever and hopefully for the better.

Just over a year ago, we moved into the new Education Centre, and so much has happened since then it's really hard to keep up with developments. The Lock Centre has been open every day this year so far and has had a coat of paint added, as well. The card machine, newly installed in November 2018, is now taking about a third of all the transactions. We have regular volunteers undertaking gardening and ground maintenance, and the recent planting of shrubs at the front of the Education Centre continues our stewardship of the area. I get stopped by both visitors and regulars to Batchworth who all comment on how well looked after the area appears with no litter or graffiti.

The Pride of Batchworth continues to provide us with significant income, but we have had problems with a couple of the roof panels leaking, one of which has been fixed and the other will wait until it gets a bit warmer.

The volunteer coffee morning was also extremely well attended, but if you didn't manage to make it I do hope to see you at the next social which is the Ceilidh on the 8th February. Somebody will win the 'Soap on a Rope' whether they want to or not!

The annual RWT awards were presented at the coffee morning, so well done to the winners, Fabian H, David M, Nick D, Chris F, Simon T and Martyn S. If you would like to know why they won then ask them, as my lips are now sealed until next year!

The Canal & River Trust are planning on planting some trees in the nearby hedgerows and alongside the towpath in 2020, so if any of you are available on Friday 13th March for a bit of tree planting, you will be most welcome to help out. More details nearer the day.

We are taking external bookings from a number of organisations and companies in the Education Centre, from art workshops and an inclusion project for people with learning difficulties, through to corporate meetings and team building days. The Centre is becoming well-known as a high quality flexible space that adds value to us as an organisation and provides a much-needed community space within Rickmansworth. We will continue to market and expand these activities throughout next year.

In closing I would just like to wish you all a peaceful New Year, and I look forward to seeing you all again in 2020.

Mark



Rob Reports

March 2019 saw the first school using the new Education Centre and classroom facilities. Lanchester Community Free School made the booking to fit with the topic 'Industrial Revolution.' All the arrangements went well, considering it is one thing trying to envisage how a group of school children will use the space and another thing actually having them there. Even the weather was mild, and a school that was new to Learning at the Lock went away very satisfied.

Bookings had been coming in during the winter and spring, and the total number of schools that visited was 32 – the highest number since I became the programme manager. Many schools come year after year, but we were very pleased to see visits from a number of schools that had not booked before. Two new schools, Stanburn Primary and Elangeni, booked for 2020 within a day of visiting us in 2019.

The new Education Centre has been widely advertised, and schools are aware of the Learning at the Lock programme, but it's the quality of the facilities that makes the schools want to book again, which further improved as the summer went on. The site is tight for space at lunchtime, and the children need a bit of downtime before completing the whole day, so new activities, in keeping with the era of the canal heritage, have been introduced. The children can now play with traditional cup-and-ball skills, noughts and crosses and hopscotch. My attempt to introduce jacks or five stones may have to be abandoned, as the little pieces seem to scatter to unknown corners, but most schools are very good at helping to put the activities away after playtime. There is also a colouring activity for children who like to sit quietly after lunch.

Volunteers are the essential ingredient for the success of the operation. An example of such commitment came when St Peter's School had booked a date last March, but the weather forecast was dismal. Strong winds and flood warnings had been issued, so the school contacted me to cancel the booking – a perfectly reasonable request. The morning of the day the school had booked seemed perfectly fine, and there was no suggestion of the terrible weather that had been predicted. At 8:30am I had a call from St Peter's School asking if the class could come to Learning at the Lock. Closing my eyes and with my fingers tightly crossed, I said, 'Yes, no problem.' I spent the next ten minutes frantically ringing the volunteers, mainly leaving messages on mobile phones. I had to drive down to Batchworth myself to prepare all the equipment for the session. One by one people returned the calls and everything was in place for the school by 9:30am - phew!

The new volunteers have fitted in well. Sheila Gilbert has made the history sessions her own, enthralling children with the story of how the canals were built. Douglas Paterson has joined the lock volunteers. Very recently Ken Allen has re-joined the trust as a volunteer helping with the lock. Simon Turnbull has become a skipper on the 'Pride of Batchworth' for Learning at the Lock. Alison Moore has helped with 'Roger' and conducting.

The Learning at the Lock programme is not content to rest on its laurels, and we are now striving to achieve a nationally recognised education standard. Work has already been going on with a small group to prepare our activities for a 'Quality Badge': we have revamped the volunteer handbook and rewritten a leaflet to send to schools, among other measures, and we are confident that the standard will be met.

Rob



Rickmansworth Festival 2020

We have already started our planning for 2020, and the team is busy getting ready to release the trade and boat booking information on 2nd January. New traders have already got in touch wanting to make a booking, and our catering waiting list has been growing steadily. So if you want to book a burger unit for that all-important garden party, just get in touch!

As I mentioned in the Summer Batchworth Telegraph, our costs have increased from 2019 and the overall budget is continuing to face challenges. We plan to begin the weekend with a balanced budget and our income matching our expenditure. While we are starting to gain commercial sponsorship, we still need more to achieve this aim. We have also introduced a charge for providing an electricity supply this year, which is something caterers and traders have had for free in previous years. Steve Mander is supporting me in trying to gain local commercial sponsors, so if you have a lead to any company or organisation that may be interested in promoting their business, either with an advert in the programme or having their branding displayed around the Festival site, please get in touch with myself or Steve.

Our trade and boat booking process is now totally electronic after the successful transition to this last year. The electronic capture of information and its translation into the spreadsheets we need to manage the hundreds of traders and boaters makes life so much easier and prevents us misreading poor handwriting of emails and phone numbers! We would hope to have nearly all our bookings in by the end of March so we can then plan the detailed site layouts and mooring plans. If you do have a boat and are planning to attend please book early to avoid disappointment.

The young people's explorer trail (YET!) is going from strength to strength after being introduced by John Brice and the Waterspace team for our 25th Festival. Many more organisations want to get involved and showcase what they do to potential new young members. This is a really important initiative for our community, and getting young people involved in outdoor activities is a noble aim for YET!. Karen Fulton is managing the trail so if you have contacts in organisations that would like to participate let me know, and I will put you in touch with her.

You will remember that the Education Centre hosted a very successful art exhibition coordinated by Chris Slaney from the Guild of Waterways Artists. This was a great showcase for our new building and also provided a very different attraction at Batchworth. It was also financially successful for the participants. The plan is for this to be developed further for next year with other exhibits in the foyer and more children's art and craft activities in the main hall.

We are still in need of further support over the Festival weekend and in the run up to the event. Some of you may know that Carol, who manages the music for Batchworth and the Aquadrome with Asher, is having some real health challenges at the moment. She is going through some complex surgery in the next few months but is determined to be there for the Festival weekend. However, she won't be allowed to carry out her usual role of putting up the meet-and-greet gazebos and running around the Aquadrome helping manage the main stage! I want to make sure that when Carol is well on the road to recovery she can come and enjoy the event but with a team to do all the work for her. So if you fancy getting involved, email:

Rickmansworth Festival 2020 contd.

rickyfestivalentertainment@gmail.com and let us know. We wish Carol all the very best for a successful surgery and look forward to seeing her leaping about in front of the main stage to the Saturday night headline act at a future Festival, as she was last year with my wife and Kay!

So it only remains for me to request that you book some time in your 2020 diary to help with the running of the event on the weekend of 16th and 17th May. Your help is essential to the running of an enjoyable event for our local community and we could not do it without you. Almost everyone I talk to knows about the Trust through the Festival, they all very much enjoy the event and attend every year. It is also an absolutely essential fundraising event for our education work, and without the generous donations from our visitors we would not be able to do all that we do. You only need to look at our fabulous new Education Centre to see what the Festival helps us achieve.

To remind you of what you face when you volunteer with the trust over the Festival weekend, below is a photo taken by Steve Mander of Mark in his finest Festival waistcoat trying to make his beard look less grey!



High Sheriff Visits RWT!

On the 25th of October, we were privileged to host a visit from Sarah Beazley, the High Sheriff of Hertfordshire, and Cllr Paula Hiscocks, the Chairman of Three Rivers District Council. The Trust was their penultimate visit in a day's programme visiting various voluntary organisations in Rickmansworth.

We met them outside the Education Centre before taking them to the Lock Centre to see our operation and moving on to visit Roger. We then returned to the warm and dry of the Education Centre, where we showed them the new building and discussed our work over a cup of tea.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped host the afternoon and also to my wife, Carol, who, on special request, made the scones! Visits such as this are a great recognition of all the excellent work done by our volunteers for the Trust.





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.

Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge Update

As I reported in the summer, we are in the process of registering for the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge. The team consisting of Rob Moore, Mike Lansdown, Pam Paterson, Fabian Hiscock and myself have nearly completed the work to start the registration process.

The education section of our website has been totally updated to reflect our learning objectives and deliverables so that schools can clearly see whether Learning at the Lock is the right educational visit for them. We have a new Learning at the Lock leaflet in the final stages of proofing, and it should be available for the start of our 2020 season. We have updated several of our processes to bring them up-to-date and introduced new ones where we have gaps, so we are addressing all the needs of the standard. We have rewritten the Learning and the Lock Handbook for volunteers, and this will be rolled out in 2020 so everyone has the best information for supporting our schools. We have refreshed our DBS checks to ensure all volunteers and employees have current checks. We have also hosted a first aid course at the Education Centre so we have a good number of trained first aiders for all our volunteering activities.

So as you can see a lot has been going on and it all results in an improved level of professionalism. Hopefully early in 2020 we will successfully complete the registration process and be able to start using the logo below when corresponding with schools!

Council for Learning Outside the Classroom

Thank You, Charter Volunteers!

I would like to thank all the charter volunteers who have contributed to a sterling performance of over 445 hours this year through about 75 charters. Of course, the time in setting and clearing up (particularly in the case of Nick and David, as shown by their award at the November coffee morning!) are not included in this total.

Special thanks go to those who went out of their way to help when I was in panic mode over the lack of crew on some of the trips or for last minute bookings.

The not-inconsiderable sum raised by these charters goes a long way to support the Trust's endeavours.

Best wishes, Jillian



Carols at Batchworth Lock

What a wonderful occasion this was. Well over a hundred people of all ages, many wearing Santa hats, congregated all around the lock, on the bridges, on the steps and on the Pride. The weather was clement, and the whole area looked stunning – atmospheric lights radiating out from the Canal Centre made the place look magical. Thank you Mark. Thank you, also, to David and Simon for setting up, marshalling and clearing up.

I have missed this event for a couple of years, unfortunately, but I discover that it has burgeoned into quite something. In front of the new Education Centre, a projector showed the words of the carols in large legible writing, with Christmas scenes as background. (My daughter thought this sounded like karaoke, but it was much better than that.) Malcolm Lee, from the Boaters' Christian Fellowship, led us all, aided by Henry Kingsnorth quietly on the bridge. He masterminds the whole affair. Local brass band Chiltern Brass played under the gazebo, and the Rickmansworth Players Choir, augmented by some Herts Choir members, made it possible for us all to sing with gusto. Malcolm cleverly interwove the Christmas story between the carols. He even introduced a couple of seasonal risqué jokes! It was an excellent start to the festive season, with lots of favourite carols and some lesser known ones. Malcolm managed to make the age-old story of Jesus' birth fresh and exciting.

This was a lovely carol concert. I intend to make sure that it becomes an unmissable fixture in our diary from now on.

Pam Paterson, Trustee



A Fishy Tail

When walking over the road bridge behind our Education Centre, not many volunteers peer over and look into the river that flows under the road. If they did during the summer, they might see large carp sunning themselves and swimming in and out of the lily pads there. It was after seeing the fish there over this last summer that I decided to put in a plan of action to catch one.

Baiting every two days over a period of eight days with about two pints of sweetly flavoured rice mixed with sweetcorn, I hoped this would get them feeding and, though the geese would sometimes eat the bait, enough would be there for the fish.

Speaking to Mark about my plan to fish, I asked about the waders he uses to clear vegetation from some stretches of the rivers in our area, as I might need them to free the fish if it bolted into the lilies. He said they were in the workshop if I needed them.

I also opted to use 15LB line hoping to immediately stop the fish from going into the lilies.

On arriving, three fish were seen swimming in and out of the lilies, but not into a clear spot I could cast to, so I waited for a fish to move further out. One did and I cast out to him just as he moved further out on to the shallow area, I dropped the bait six inches from his nose, and he took it straight away.

I managed to keep him away from any snags as he fought for about five minutes, sometimes diving deep and under the bridge.

As he tired, I managed to call the Canal Centre to see if anyone could help and take pictures. Nick Dower answered – he was waiting to take a charter out. He came over just as I got the fish in the net and took some photos. The fish was then put back in the water to fight another day.

So the next time you walk over the bridge you might see him sunning himself again.

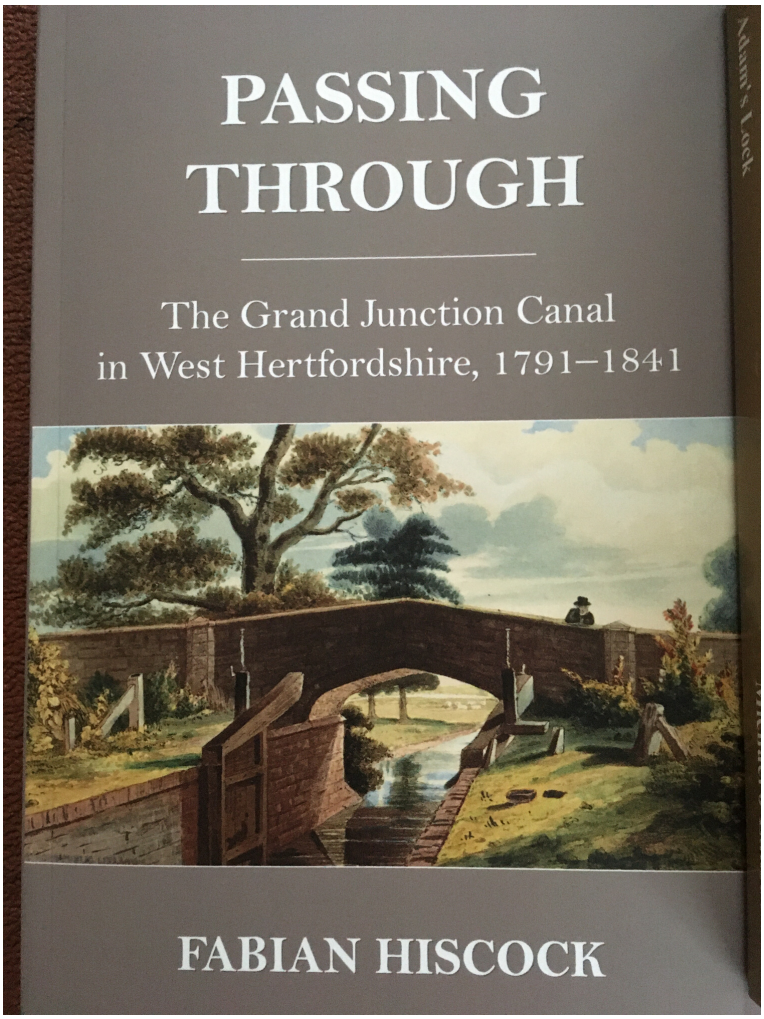
Martin Stokes

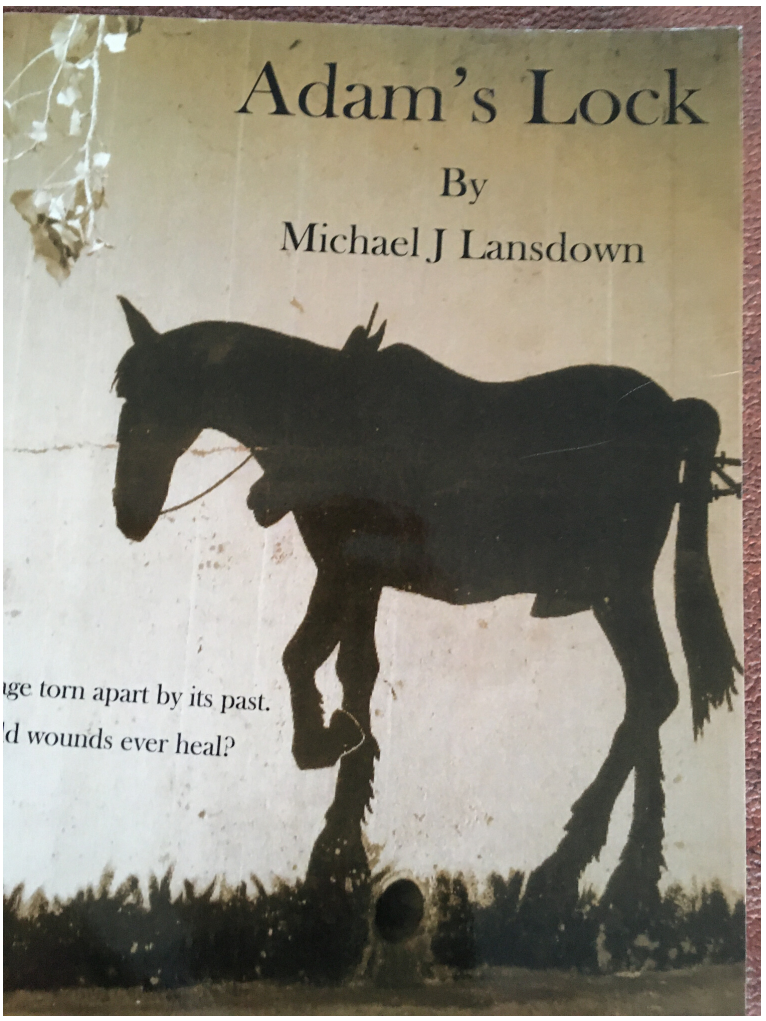


Talented Authors at RWT

Did you know that RWT boasts at least two published authors writing canal based books?

In the Autumn, many of us attended the book launch of RWT polymath Fabian Hiscock's 'Passing Through, a History of the Grand Union Canal in West Hertfordshire, 1791-1841'. It is an academic study and a most erudite and thorough work that will be a useful reference book for all of us teaching at Learning at the Lock and especially those giving talks to adults.





'Adam's Lock', however, written by RWT Trustee Mike Lansdown, is a work of fiction which would interest adults and teenagers alike. A village in Hertfordshire has had a troubled past. Mike's historical novel moves easily between the present day and the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries when canal building in Hertfordshire was at its height. The main characters are teenagers who find themselves investigating why their village always seems to have been divided. Themes of ethics, law, justice, class, relationships and social history are covered in the book. It is a quick read, and recommended to any student interested in these topics, particularly history.

Both books are paperback and for sale in the Canal Centre, and they would make ideal presents.

Pam Paterson, Trustee

'Adrift - A Secret Life of London's Waterways' by Helen Babbs

Reviewed by Fabian Hiscock

At first sight you would think this book is just another of the long list in the 'my canal story' genre. It is, in fact, much more than that, and is required reading for anyone interested in how the capital's waterways are used.

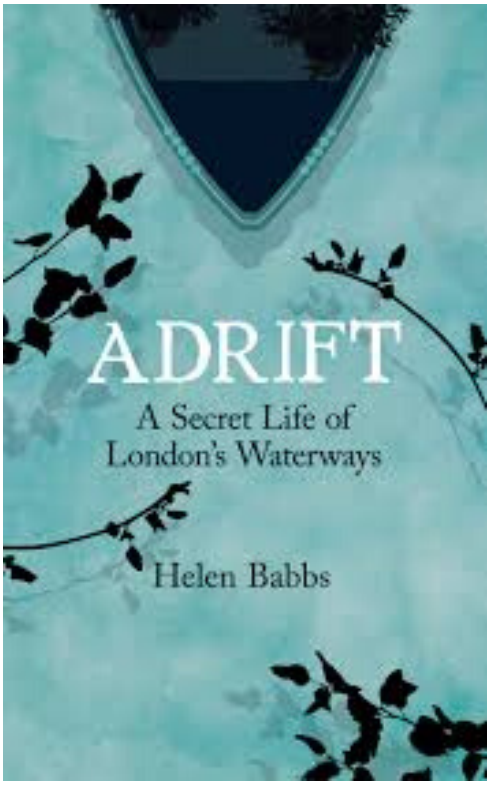
Helen Babbs is an established author and journalist, and it shows. 'Adrift' is beautifully written and well argued when she is making a case. The map illustrations are quirky, and not quite intuitive, but that doesn't matter. This is an account of a single year (2014), with each season set in a different part of London, and even the most experienced boater will learn something new from her. Babbs and her partner are Londoners and continuous cruisers, and there is a great deal on the way they have to move to comply with the rules – in fact, the light this shines on the live-aboard communities of London is just one of the attractions of the book.

The opening description of winter on the Lee Navigation is terrific. Experienced boaters who sniff at the descriptions of boats and waterways will have missed the point: this context is central to the theme. 'Adrift' is an intelligent book: Babbs knows the literature and uses it well, especially to inform some of the essays she presents. And there are several, each deserving attention in its own right. Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes get extensive treatment, including their wildlife and plants, and the impact of the Olympics on the area is carefully discussed. You'll also find the effects of the work of the London Biodiversity Partnership and its associated bodies, the biology of lichens, cormorants, the operation of Hampstead (Camden) Locks, marionette puppeteering, the social history of nineteenth century London, and – a particular highlight – a real examination of the lost waterways of London. To her great credit, Babbs has taken great trouble to understand the heritage of the world in which she lives, and she presents it beautifully.

But the central feature is the boat and how it's lived in. Keeping warm and then cool, finding and using a san station, dealing with flooding due to a leak, docking for blacking – all quite ordinary stuff, but important to the story and made interesting by the writing.

And woven through the whole is the London housing crisis – its roots, the problems it causes, how canal dwellers deal with it (or not), and how the waterways might be improved to help deal with it. You may not agree with all the points she makes, but she will at least challenge you on why you don't.

'Adrift' is an outstanding book, especially for those who love the waterways, but actually for a great range of interests. The Canal Centre will have a copy in the reference library, but it's worth buying a copy: it will repay careful reading.



End of Year Caption Competition

In between issues of Batchworth Telegraph any photos I am sent are rigorously checked to ensure they are not "Fake News" so the Batchworth Telegraph always publishes the truth! However the complex algorithms that are used to determine truth and accuracy around any photographs sent in have been overloaded by the heavy demands of the recent General Election...

Therefore, we are going to have to rely on the talents of our readers to determine what is really going on in the photo below. There are no prizes apart from the satisfaction that you have contributed to the Batchworth Telegraph's unending quest for publishing the "True News"! The worn out and frazzled algorithms have managed to narrow it down to three options:



1. Mark is introducing a new group of volunteers to RWT who are modelling the new 2020 volunteer attire. This designer collection has been introduced in the sincere hope that each of our volunteers can find something that appeals to their taste. Different uniforms will be required for each of the different volunteer roles.

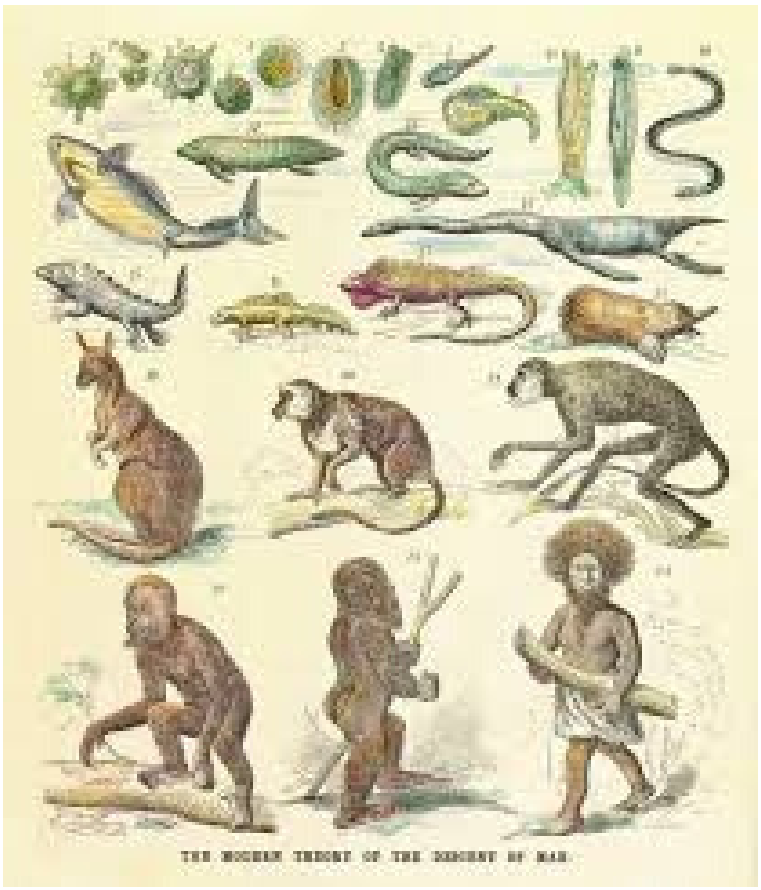
2. Mark and Chris have just completed a successful audition as dames for the next Watersmeet pantomime. The finely dressed lady on the left was quoted as saying she had never seen such a performance by a right pair of xxxxs!

3. Mark and Chris are welcoming the cast of the latest Watersmeet pantomime to Batchworth for a photo shoot to promote the 2019/2020 production of Captain Hook. The cast came down for a ride on the Pride of Batchworth and enjoyed posing for photographs on the Pride and around the lock.

The Batchworth Missing Link...

We have just received a photo of some strange creatures emerging from the woods near Batchworth Lock. The photographer said this could be the first firm evidence of the "missing link" which is rumoured to be responsible for the smart and tidy appearance of the area around Batchworth Lock.

The photographer managed to take this single photo before making a break for it to avoid any confrontation. If you see these creatures when in the Batchworth Lock area, please do not get too close, although some people state they can be placated, if disturbed, by offers of a pint in the White Bear!







Upcoming Events

Saturday 8th February - **Rickmansworth Waterways Trust Ceilidh**

Saturday 2nd-Sunday 3rd May - **Canalway Cavalcade, Little Venice**

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

Saturday 18th-Sunday 19th July - **Cosgrove Canal Festival**

Saturday 25th July - **Linslade Canal Festival**

Saturday 1st-Sunday 2nd August - **Fenny Stratford Canal Festival**

Saturday 5th December (TBC) - **Canal-side Carols at Batchworth**

Tickets are now on sale for the RWT Ceilidh and Supper at the Mill End Sports and Social Club on Saturday 8th February 2020. So if you are already wondering how to lose any extra lbs you may acquire during the festive period, why not add this to your plans?

There will be a fully licensed bar with doors open at 7.00pm and the dancing starting at 7.30pm to the music of Tim Brooks and Threadneedle supported by caller Martin Lindridge.

Tickets, including supper, cost just £15.00 per person. Funds raised from this evening will go to support our Heritage Education work at Batchworth Lock so you are supporting a very good cause!

Please email david.montague@btinternet.com (or call 07447 600065) to confirm the number of tickets you require.

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