

# The Rickmansworth Festival

## The origins of the Festival

The Rickmansworth Festival started as a purely canal based festival in 1993, initially as part of the British Waterways "Canals 200" celebration that year. The first event was on a large scale, incorporating the Aquadrome as the main location for land based activities.

Subsequent years saw a continuation with a much smaller Festival based around Batchworth Lock and the area known as the Glade, adjacent to the Grand Union Canal just south of the road bridge at Batchworth.

In 2002 the Three Rivers District Council's Environment Fair was incorporated into the event, but was located separately in the Aquadrome. The following year the Festival outgrew the Glade, and moved its main location into the Aquadrome as well. The extra space allowed the Festival to take on a wider community focus, and participation was opened out to local community groups and charities who were able to promote their activities, without charge, as part of the larger event.

## Music at the Festival

The entertainment side of the Festival was also broadened to provide four showcases for mostly local talent. This consisted of a small area at Batchworth Lock to provide music by the canal; our main stage in the Aquadrome, which supports a wide range of different performers; the small, mostly acoustic, music stage in our bar area; and the folk and alternative, poetry-influenced "Owlsworld" stage in the Environment area.

In keeping with our community focus we wanted to provide a platform for new local groups and musicians who didn't get the opportunity to perform in front of a large audience or on an open-air stage.



This has proved very successful, and we now have many more groups approaching us for the chance to perform than we have room for.

In 2006 we changed to name of the event from the "Rickmansworth Canal Festival and Environment Fair" to the "Rickmansworth Festival" which reflects the much broader appeal of the event to the whole community.

## Boats at the Festival

Around thirty thousand people visit the Festival each year, with the historic boats seen here providing a major attraction.



Up to 100 other boats also attend.

## **The Festival Today**

The Festival is now well established as a celebration of the waterways and the environment for over ten years. It is held on the third weekend of May each year on the last weekend of Rickmansworth Week, and is now the major event on the local calendar.

The Festival is supported by Three Rivers District Council, the Canal and River Trust, Rickmansworth Chamber of Commerce, Hertfordshire Police and the Inland Waterways Association. The Festival now showcases several main areas: -

### **The Boats, the Canal and the work of the Trust**

The original attraction for many is the boats – historic working boats to visit and watch, modern boats, steam boats...all sorts, and this aspect of the Festival has many features. Boats are moored up to four deep all along the towpath from Batchworth Lock to Stocker's Lock, presenting a real spectacle.

The Trust also organises a full program of trip boats over the weekend allowing visitors to take in the atmosphere of the festival from the water.

A main focus on and around the canal at Batchworth is the educational work of the Trust, with many activities for children and adults alike and the opportunity to navigate the locks of the Trust's unique working model canal system, "The Little Union Canal".

### **Care for the Environment**

The second key area of the Festival is the Three Rivers Environment Fair. This typically includes about 30 different exhibitors and has been growing in attendance and popularity as local concern for the quality of the environment that we live in increases.

Here you'll also find guided walks around the Aquadrome area and fascinating and informative talks about the local flora and fauna.

### **Musical Entertainment to appeal to all tastes**

A really vital element of the weekend is the programme of music and entertainment presented across four stages, at Batchworth Lock, at the Main Stage in the Aquadrome, on the small acoustic stage and in the Owlsworld tent. We have even featured a Dixie jazz band on a narrow boat on the canal.

The emphasis is on entertainment for all tastes, and we're always ready to hear from new groups and individuals who wish to gain experience in live performance - although we're likely to have a waiting list!



Our extensive programme is supported by a few well established and popular who perform over the weekend; but the bulk is provided by these amateur dance, drama and music groups, unsigned local bands - and especially young musicians.

### **Charities, Trade and Craft Stalls, full range of Catering and a Funfair**

With a funfair, over 70 trade and charity group stalls and exhibits, a program of children's entertainment and a full range of catering and refreshments across the festival site, the Rickmansworth Festival weekend is designed as a real community event for local families with something for everyone to enjoy.