



The Batchworth Telegraph

Newsletter of the Friends, Winter 2016

Albert on the Move

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Chairman's Chat...

Welcome to the last issue of the Batchworth Telegraph for 2016, the twice yearly magazine from Rickmansworth Waterways Trust. It has been a fairly eventful year for the Trust and maybe at this time we should look back and reflect on all we have achieved this year and the challenges we have ahead as we get close to our 25th anniversary as a charity.

When we learnt early in the year that we would no longer be able to use the classroom in the Old Mill on the Affinity Water site many of us were wondering how on earth we could continue our education programme. This seemed a devastating blow to our organisation. We were initially unable to find a suitable home close enough to the lock and so we disappointed several schools and also you, our volunteers, who so much enjoy helping with the children. However, as I know many have learnt over the years, change and adversity can often make an organisation that has a good foundation even stronger.

After a few weeks of hard work considering all possible options, we found a short-term home for our classroom in Room 1 at St Mary's Church hall, and we also began to think radically about a long-term home for our education

programme. Without losing access to the Mill we would not have even considered designing our own education facility. As we look back now and see how far we have come since the news in early April, you would be hard pressed to find any scars from the experience we have been through, and I feel it has made us stronger.

Yes, we have not run as many visits as we hoped to in 2016, but since finding St Mary's we now have a working alternative classroom that will allow us to continue running Learning at the Lock in this way for the foreseeable future. None of the schools that have come this year commented on the different venue, even those that have been coming for many years. Finding the classroom was part of the challenge. The remaining work was completed by Mark and all of you who volunteer with Learning at the Lock and made the new arrangements work for the children, teachers and helpers. I was fortunate to be able to help at many of the visits from when I retired at the end of June, and I joined a team which made the programme look like it had always been run from the room in the church hall. There was no sense of compromise or making do and your willingness to succeed was essential in making the children feel welcome and enjoy a fantastic day. The children always see the programme for the first time and they still have a fantastic day and take away all the unique experiences and memories they would if we were still using the

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Mill. The Trustees are happy that this arrangement will allow us to continue to successfully run Learning at the Lock until we have permanent accommodation.

I will talk separately in this Batchworth Telegraph about the progress with building a new education facility but it is important to recognise that even if it takes longer to raise the funds and complete than we would like, we have a good home to continue our education work in for as long as we need to.

We will hopefully confirm the appointment of a new person early in the New Year to take over responsibility as Education Programme Leader while Mark moves on to a slightly shorter working week looking after the general management of the Trust's other activities. This is a unique role to fill and so it has been important to find someone who values the programme in the same way as the Trustees, Mark and our education volunteers do. There will be a transition period as Mark brings the new person up to speed in the role and we put in place the bookings for our 2017 visits.

Thank you for all your support of our activities in 2016. We have welcomed many new volunteers this year and we extend a sincere welcome to you all and hope you feel part of family Rickmansworth Waterways Trust. If you have new ideas of things we can do and suggestions on how we can

improve as an organisation then please let me know. We have trained more people this year in running the Pride of Batchworth to meet the increasing demand for boat trips and charters. If you want to get more boating experience or benefit from specific training please let Mark know and he will accommodate. We are also still always requiring volunteers to help out at the Lock Centre, so if you can volunteer for a few hours please let us know.

My personal thanks to all of you who have helped the Trust in any way during the last year. Whether it be as a volunteer running our boats, working in the Lock Centre, helping run the Festival, supporting our work at Batchworth or helping with Learning at the Lock. Our real strength as an organisation is in the people that make things happen. As an organisation we do make a lot happen and that is down to all of you.

I hope you have a good Christmas and New Year with your family and friends, and I look forward to an exciting and challenging 2017.

Best regards,

David



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.

Mark Reports

Learning at the Lock

Learning at the Lock has now finished for 2016, and once again we had a very successful year in providing an amazing school visit for many children after our relocation to St Mary's Church. Figures are slightly down on 2015 but this is purely due to having to cancel some trips during the beginning of the year.

Final figures are 561 children attended the programme and 676 hours of volunteers time was provided to present the various topics covered in the syllabus. We continue to attract a stream of new volunteers and I am extremely grateful to everyone who assists with this activity.

Once again, the dedication, good humour and professionalism of the volunteers provides the Trust with an education programme that we can all be proud of.

The feedback received from the schools shows how much they appreciate the day, and the letters and drawings sent to us by the children seriously reflect how much they take away from their experience. Our move away from the Mill does not appear to have altered the views of either the children or teachers on their day with us.

I would like to take this opportunity in thanking each and every one of the volunteers who do so much for the programme and look forward to seeing you all back with us once again in 2017. We already have five sessions booked!

If anyone wants to try their hand at presenting Learning at the Lock then we would only be too happy to provide the opportunity for you.

After three years of working for the

Trust full time, I have now decided that it's time for me to reduce my hours and with the full support from the Trustees, from the beginning of 2017, I will be working three days a week concentrating on the upkeep and maintenance of our boats, the Lock Centre, the area around Batchworth and of course looking after and supporting you, the volunteers.

The role of Education Programme Manager will be split into a separate role and I look forward to warmly welcoming a new person to the role early in the New Year. The Trustees are in the final stages of the selection process and we hope to have a person who will provide the Trust with wonderful drive and dynamism and with a background that will take the Learning at the Lock to a new and higher level.

Pride of Batchworth and Roger

Those of you who regularly read the Batchworth Telegraph know of the ongoing maintenance that we have undertaken on both the *Pride* and *Roger*.

Both boats are regularly maintained, and this ensures we can run our boating operations without hitches. Regular oil and filter changes, fan belt replacement, window maintenance, etc. are all essential in keeping our assets in operational order.

New skippers and crew have been trained during 2016, which means our pool of volunteers able to undertake charters and ferry trips has also increased. If anyone wants to undergo the training or get some experience steering and looking after *Roger* please let me know as the winter months are a good time to get this training done ready for what we hope will be an even busier 2017.

The Lock Centre and Batchworth Area

The lock centre has been staffed continuously throughout 2016 and my thanks once again go to the volunteers who open up and meet

the public. The figures for volunteer hours provided at the lock centre (to the 30th November) is 1,576 and the number of visitors (again to the 30th November) is 9,200. For a small charity this is absolutely fantastic.

So far this year the shop has only been closed on one day! What an achievement!

Our continued open presence at Batchworth is really appreciated not only by our customers but also the boaters who live and pass through the Batchworth area.

Our volunteer and clear up days are well supported by both volunteers and other companies who provide their time to help us keep Batchworth looking beautiful.

Volunteers

We continue to get a regular stream of new volunteers wanting to join the Trust. Volunteer support and development will be one of my priorities in 2017.

Everyone who helps with the Trust contributes to its success. From the whole of the Festival Team to those who undertake ground works and maintenance, from the litter pickers to the Trustees, from those of you who undertake charters and ferry trips, sometimes in extremely challenging weather, to those who sit by themselves on a cold November day in the lock centre, you should all be extremely proud of our charity which is recognised by those outside of the Trust as a well run, well organised and financially stable organisation.

This short report does not really do justice to all the hard work and commitment shown by all of our volunteers. It is really quite amazing how much we accomplish and all of you should feel extremely proud that you belong to such a vibrant, energetic, fun and expanding charity.

Happy Christmas and New Year to you all, and I really look forward to seeing you all in 2017.

Mark

Volunteers' Coffee Morning

This is fast becoming one of the highlights of RWT's year. It is a wonderful chance to network and catch up. Over 35 of us met at Café

Nero in Rickmansworth, meeting other volunteers who do different activities. Learning at the Lock and the Canal Centre personnel were particularly well represented. Many Trustees came along for coffee, pastries, Quality Street chocolates and more. Other café visitors must have thought we were playing musical chairs!

Mark gave a round-up of volunteer statistics for the year and thanked all

for their continued support, making us feel proud to belong to such a thriving organisation! David, our Chairman, thanked Mark for the invaluable work he has done as Education Programme Manager, and we applauded loudly.

Trustee Les Mead captured the atmosphere on the photos shown.



Albert on the Move!

When we were bringing the Roger into the Chess Lock for Halloween, we were joined by the historic boat Albert who came up in the lock with Roger. Many of you may know Albert is a wooden boat built by

Walkers of Rickmansworth for the Ovaltine Company and after its restoration it was a floating restaurant based at Batchworth Lock. Tim Woodbridge, a founding RWT Trustee, Albert's owner and original restorer, was taking Albert back to its winter mooring in the Chess Basin single handed. Not an easy task as the Chess arm is not a frequent navigation route, so Tim had borrowed the powerful tug

Hornet to help firstly clear the weed and silt from the channel before Albert could navigate its way up to the lift bridge and onto its mooring.

After some hard work all went well and Albert was successfully navigated through the silt and weed onto its winter mooring. We managed to get some excellent pictures of Albert on its way!







Rickmansworth Festival 2017

Although outwardly all seems very quiet on the Festival front, we are well advanced with our plans for the 2017 Rickmansworth Festival which will be our 24th Festival. Our booking process will go live on January 2nd and we will probably be just about full of traders and boats by the end of February.

As you may be aware we have had several changes to the Festival team for 2017. Kay Fearn, our current RWT treasurer, used to manage all the trade and boat bookings single-handed, which was a considerable undertaking. Just to illustrate the task, we had over 110 traders in 2016 and over 115 boats. Each booking generates a considerable amount of email correspondence as each has to be acknowledged, a receipt issued and additional arrival instructions sent out. Also we have specific requirements both traders and boaters that we need to accommodate.

For traders we process bookings on a first-come-first-served basis, and

we have to ensure we are not getting too many of any particular trade type. No-one (traders and public) would appreciate us booking 10 stalls all selling handmade fudge, and believe me there are a lot of people selling fudge! Each trader can have specific requirements for power, not being next to another type of trade (fine clothing next to someone selling strongly smelling food can cause issues!), some want to put a caravan or large van behind their stand or want to negotiate a particular concession rate for a service such as face painting. We also have to consider the jigsaw that is the Aquadrome site. Many times I think if we only had a nice, large, flat field it would be so much easier, but that would ruin the character of the event! So Kay and I always allocate traders' positions on the site plan as they book to ensure the spaces we have fit them and as we reach capacity the juggling and shuffling of pitches starts until we have no more space and start our waiting list.

For boats the situation is very similar. We only have so many bank-side mooring positions and a limited total space in the Batchworth pound. We have to give towpath priority to those with disabilities, traders,

charities and other organisations who add colour to the event and need to promote their cause. We also know some boats want to leave earlier than others, so if they are positioned on the inside of a four-deep mooring position this can create a challenge. We also have an increasing number of wide beam boats that can only be positioned in certain areas and some deep drafted boats which cannot be moored at all positions. All this adds up to another jigsaw that needs to be managed efficiently to avoid upsetting our Festival participants.

Since Kay has now decided to pick up her career again after a short break, the role of coordinating all the bookings for boats and traders was beyond even her superwoman powers. Due to the scale of the role and also the increasingly short period of time that all the bookings now come in it is now time to split the role and separate the boat and trade bookings. The Waterspace team is joined by local boater Rachel Jacobs who will work with John Brice's team to manage the tide of boat bookings. Janet Billing is joining the team to coordinate all the trade bookings and ensure the process is managed efficiently. We welcome

them to the team and hope they find their time on the Festival team very rewarding as many team members find there is nothing quite like the buzz you get when the event all comes together and you can look back and say "I helped make this all happen"!

We are making another change this year to the main entertainment stage which I am sure Carol has already filled with acts from all over the local area. This year, at the last minute, we decided to move the main stage outside the fenced part of the picnic area which gave us much more space for the increasing numbers of visitors to the event. The issue was that this made the stage look even smaller which was already a concern amongst the site team. Since our budget does not currently run to putting in a larger purpose-built stage we have worked with the marquee company to identify a way of increasing the height of the marquee. This will allow us to put in

a higher stage and also more suitable overhead lighting to increase the impact of the stage in the main entertainment area. We will continue to review and develop the Festival as our resources and budget allows, so if you have suggestions please contact any member of the Festival team and we will listen to your ideas. Better still, come and join the team and help make it all happen.

This year the Festival is increasingly important as in 2017 we are looking to commit a significant amount of money to provide a new facility for our education programme. We have been very fortunate to receive a generous sponsorship for the main stage from Warner Bros Studios for the last three years, which has helped greatly with the costs for this aspect of the Festival. Last year was the final year of this arrangement and we are sincerely grateful to them for their support and understand that it is time for other organisations to benefit from their

generosity. So this gives Steve Mander, our sponsorship manager, the task of finding a suitable organisation or organisations to fill the gap in our budget (no pressure Steve...). Steve has updated our sponsorship information and is working with many local companies to see if they are interested in promoting their organisations at one of the largest community events in the Three Rivers area. If you have ideas or leads with companies who may be interested in getting involved, please get in touch with Steve Mander.

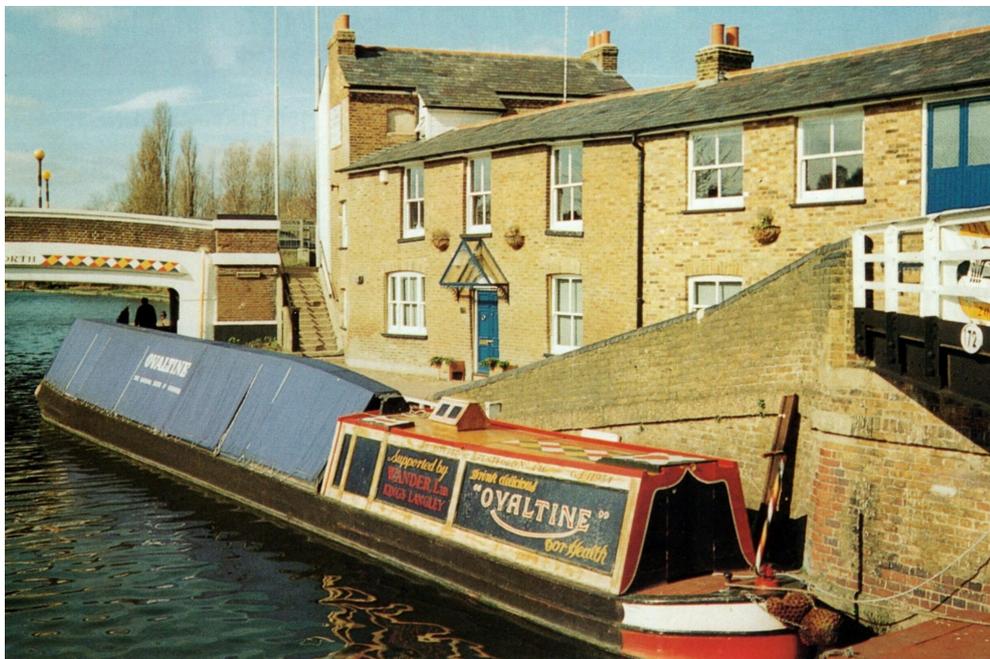
I will leave you with a photo taken by Greg Townsend of what the Festival is all about – people coming together and having a great family day out!



Our History

As we approach our 25th anniversary, I thought it worth reminding everyone of how the Trust came into being. I was fortunate enough last week to be passed some archive material retained by Ken Moore, one of the founding members, which includes many original materials, including copies of the Rickmansworth and District Residence Association newsletter, *Independence*, from around the time RWT was first set up. There is a lot of background on how the first festival came into being, including a set of 35mm slides, which I have the ability to scan and save in a digital format to share further. Our definitive history will have to wait but this should give a little taster!

The first reference to a desire to start a canal museum at Batchworth is contained in an article written by Ken Moore in the autumn 1989 edition of *Independence*. I am sure there was much local discussion prior to this. The results of a survey from a previous issue showed considerable interest in setting up a museum based on the substantial canal history and industry in the area, such as Walkers boat yard where Tesco now stands. Potential sites mentioned include the Chess Basin/ Church Wharf but no mention of Batchworth in this article. Note is also made to a restoration project, "*in which two canal enthusiasts, having rescued a sinking and almost broken-up narrow boat from a canal in Derbyshire are now endeavouring to restore it to its former glory.*" This is a reference to the narrow boat Albert, one of the Ovaltine boats built at Walkers in Ricky. One of the enthusiasts was Tim Woodbridge mentioned and pictured elsewhere in this issue. The second was Chris Collins who also did the work to restore our boat Roger to its former glory.



Albert at Batchworth Lock reproduced from *Hertfordshire Countryside* printed in May 1994

We then look to the spring 1991 issue and an article refers to the coming 200th anniversary in 1993 of the Act of Parliament which authorised the Grand Junction Canal. Since celebrations were being planned along the canal it was proposed that Rickmansworth also hosted an event and the Rickmansworth Residents Association had started preliminary discussions with British Waterways on this possibility of holding an event on the second weekend of Rickmansworth week in May 1993. This issue of *Independence* also refers to the anticipated opening of a canal information point in the renovated building at Batchworth Lock which was formally the Boat Inn, i.e. our current Lock Centre. The canal information centre was actually first opened on Saturday 29th June 1991 in collaboration with the residents' association and Waterways Heritage, which I think was a company formed by Tim Woodbridge to restore Albert – maybe someone can add to this?

Later in the autumn 1991 issue Ken describes that a separate organisation was being formed to take the Festival plans originated by the residents association and this

was to be the Rickmansworth Waterways Trust. The chairman was to be Colin Eastman and the Vice Chairman was Ken Moore with other members from the residents association and Waterways Heritage. Ken also describes the objectives for the Festival which include the canal, the environment, music, the community and education which you may recognise as some of the key elements of our mission as a charity and also of the Festival still today.

The formal incorporation of RWT as a limited company was reported in the spring 1992 issue of *Independence* and further efforts were being made to fill the remaining posts required to run the Trust and the Festival. The autumn 1992 issue records the first open meeting of the Trust to review the Festival as being held on Thursday 12th November at St Mary's Church centre.

So although it is challenging to put an exact date as the start of the Trust it is clear that we should recognise 2017 as our 25th anniversary. We have come a long way since our early beginnings but it is great to see the values that were originally at the forefront of the organisation are still our core values today!

Halloween at Batchworth

For the second year running the Trust and the Cafe@Lock 81 came together to celebrate (if that is the right word...) Halloween at Batchworth. Roger was moved up

into the Chess Lock and decorated inside and out for Sunday 30th of October, and the cafe was decorated as well. We welcomed visitors to view *Roger's* cabin, there was live music at the cafe and sweets were available for our younger guests.

Even some of our volunteers dressed up for the occasion and Graham made a fine spectacle in cape and top hat steering the *Pride of Batchworth*. occasion and Graham made a fine spectacle in cape and



top hat steering the *Pride of Batchworth*.

Swan Wrestling Anyone?

One of our regular volunteers, Graham Cooper, attracted significant local Facebook fame when he intervened to prevent a couple of young swans from being attacked by an adult male swan. Bridget Saunders was drinking coffee at the Cafe @ Lock 81 on the morning of Sunday November 13th when she saw a large male swan attacking two



adolescent swans. The young swans had been cornered in the Chess arm of the canal by the large male swan who was making it quite clear it was his territory!

Graham managed to catch the two young swans and lift them out of the canal and release them in the Batchworth pound where they swam off to safety. The picture below shows Graham releasing one of the swans on this lovely sunny and still morning at Batchworth. Bridget's posting of this photo on the Rickmansworth, Chorleywood and Croxley Green Facebook group generated universal positive comments praising Graham for his actions.

Well done Graham!

Chat with a New Volunteer

(A trustee converses with a friend of 25 years, who has recently become involved with RWT)

Trustee – So what made you volunteer at Learning at the Lock?

New Volunteer (grinning) – I was 'bullied' by a friend

T – Why did she not invite you to help before?

NV – My previous volunteering job came to an end in the autumn (cook in charge of RVS Lunch Club, Rickmansworth, every Wednesday for 20 years)

T – I'm glad I grabbed you before someone else did. What are your first impressions of Learning at the

Lock?

NV - What a wonderful opportunity for young children to really enjoy history and get involved with the history of canal life.

T – I heard that you printed off the Learning at the Lock handbook. That shows commitment, I must say. You were spotted at the recent coffee morning. Any comments?

NV – What a very enthusiastic group of volunteers, of all ages!



Celebrating 25 years

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