



The Batchworth Telegraph

Newsletter of the Friends, Winter 2022/23

Boating into the Future



Roger on its way to dry dock

Inside

Our
Chairman
Speaks...



Festival
2023



RWT's
Christmas
Tree



Sadie
and the
Snow
Person



Call **01923 778382** for more details or visit **www.rwt.org.uk**



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Company number 2674596.
Registered Charity No 1024322

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Chairman's Chat...



Welcome to the winter issue of the Batchworth Telegraph for 2022/23.

It was good to see so many of you at our first face-to-face AGM since 2019 this summer on what was one of the hottest days of the year. This year has been a lot more like normal after a very difficult two years for us all and for RWT. However, it has not been without its challenges with the major breakdown of Pride compromising our ability to meet our customers' needs.

The very busy summer of education visits were significantly compromised by Pride being out of action for many weeks. I want to give my thanks to Rob Moore, our Education Programme Manager, and the team of Learning at the Lock (LaTL) volunteers for rapidly working out a solution that gave our schools the excellent educational experience they were looking for, even without a trip on Pride. This reflects the experience and maturity of the full team, and, as a result of this innovation, only one school cancelled their planned day. In fact, the children loved the art activities and Rob plans to include these again if schools request it. We are still working to expand our range of visits for adult groups where they receive a coffee, a talk and a boat trip. We are finding word of mouth is our best way of encouraging groups to come along, so if you are involved in such a group please spread the word about what we can offer. All the groups we have hosted so far have loved it!

Having Pride out of action and also the challenges brought about by COVID have focused the trustees' minds on how well the Trust is set up to be financially and organisationally secure in the longer term. We have weathered all that has been thrown at us over the last couple of years and our finances are currently sound, but this may not always be the case. One of our newer trustees, Asher Rickayzen, has business mentoring experience in helping companies improve and change, and he led us in a strategy session in the early autumn. The objective was to look at our strengths and weaknesses and focus on what we can do about improving our long-term resilience. Asher reports further on this later in this issue. One key outcome was that the Trust needs to reduce its dependence on the Festival and increase our income stream in other areas. This is not a short-term initiative and is something the trustees will continue to work on together in the coming months and years. A successful outcome will result in a much stronger charity and will continue to make the Trust a great organisation to volunteer for.

We are very grateful for the support of Jim Carn, a local Marine Engineer, for going above and beyond to source the replacement parts and fit them into the incredibly tight space in the engine bay to get Pride up and running again.

Chairman's Chat Continued...

The trustees also pass on their sincere thanks to Douglas Paterson who made a donation from his charity fund to cover the cost of the repairs and also help offset the income loss due to Pride being out of action at what is our busiest time of year. Pride is now back up and running; however, we recognise that with an ageing boat occasional breakdowns are a fact of life, despite Mark's diligent programme of routine

maintenance. As you will be aware, our plans for an electric boat are very much more long-term based on the maturity of the technology at the moment. However, we do need to plan around Pride's increasing age and Mark reports some progress on this later in this issue.

You may have noticed Roger was away from its mooring for a little longer than planned. Although the journey up to Marsworth for our planned maintenance went ahead as scheduled, work on another boat overran, meaning the work on Roger was delayed. However, the work has now been completed and Roger made it back safely on 5th January.

Work on planning the Festival is proceeding, and we have to budget around much-increased costs. Currently, the income budget is not balanced against the expenditure, so the challenge remains to bridge this gap to ensure we have a viable event.

Many thanks to all our volunteers, the trustees, Rob and Mark for all your work to support the Trust. Due to your dedication, we continue to deliver a unique experience for our visitors and schools.

Best regards,

David Montague

Mark's Musings



The first festival in two years led onto a long, hot and sunny summer. We lost about six weeks of income during July as the Pride's engine went bang, both literally and metaphorically, so income from charters and ferry trips is rather down compared to 2019. However, according to the records kept by the fine volunteers at the lock centre, by the end of November we had taken over £14,300 in ferry trips and charters.

The engine problem with the Pride highlighted just how reliant we are on the boat to generate income for us, and, as some of you may know, we are in the process of trying to acquire another purpose-built trip boat. These boats are as rare as hens' teeth and when three came on the market from

a business that's being sold in London, we were offered first refusal on any of them. Before we proceeded with the sale, we needed a secure mooring for the additional boat. Fortunately, our application to the Canal & River Trust to have a concessionary mooring at Batchworth has recently been approved, and we have had a successful survey on the boat we plan to purchase. We are now awaiting it to be issued with its boat safety certificate, so hopefully, by the time you are reading this, we will have completed the purchase.

We have a steady supply of new volunteers coming to the Trust, and, once again, my thanks go to you all for the wonderful time and commitment you show to RWT, and, as I've said for many years, we simply would not exist without you.

The search for my successor will begin in earnest within the next month or so. I joined as a volunteer in 2011 and become the General Manager in 2013 so by the time I leave in August next year, I will have been in post for 10 years. I think that's long enough, and it's important for the Trust to refresh itself and go forward.

Just a few other statistics (up to the end of November):

- the lock centre has been open every day bar one (funeral of HM The Queen)
- 10,370 recorded visitors and 1,809 hours worked in the lock centre
- 685 recorded ferry trips
- 480 kilos of bird food ordered and so far over 400 kilos sold.

That's it for me. I hope you had a great Christmas and I look forward to seeing you all in the New Year.

Mark Saxon

Rob Reports



It was with great relief to the Learning at the Lock (LaTL) team that the autumn bookings were able to go ahead with the Pride in full working order. Although the absence of a boat ride in the summer did not stop all but one of the schools from coming, the impact would be felt later if there was no boat. The art activity was very successful and many of the new schools had not booked with LatL before so were unable to compare with previous visits and gave good reviews.

Autumn has always been a

difficult time to persuade schools to make bookings. This autumn's bookings were better than most of the previous years, mainly because the schools that book regular visits each year booked one visit in the summer for the children in a year group that would have come last summer but were prevented by the COVID restrictions. The second booking was for the children in the current year group. Although there were an impressive 28 bookings in the year, the number of different schools booking was not so large.

Having said there were not so many schools, there was a

double booking from one new school. By this I mean that two different teachers from the same school had started booking without realising that the other was making the booking. Once they were told, they did ask to come together on the same date.

Unfortunately, this is not possible on our site. I have had an enquiry from the school for next year, but I am not sure which teacher has won the right to have the booking!

The class sizes did seem to be lower this year - perhaps the birth rate is low. One local school had only 20 in each class, so they were able to come as one large group. The art activity gives LatL an extra activity as four groups of 10 can work, even though the



Rob Reports Continued

volunteers have to keep a cool head to make sure the groups are in the right place at the right time! It is also a challenge to remember what information has or has not been said in each session. One of the groups in the autumn was a cub group. Doing an evening session at the end of September does present its challenges, but with a well-rehearsed routine, all the activities can be squeezed into the short space of time. I do enjoy the last boat trip in the evening when the lights are on in the boat and on the side of the canal. Cubs are usually quite excitable, but the busy schedule keeps them active.

The LatL activities are looking for new ways to present the history of the canals to different age groups. I have followed up on all the suggestions that were sent to me after the last appeal for anyone with connections with groups, such as the University of the Third Age, but with no firm bookings yet. The trustees have been discussing a number of different ways that the heritage programme can be promoted. I am also a bit concerned that by the end of November, I had only had one firm school booking. There has been a great deal of concern about the cost of living, and the teachers are also unsettled at the moment. I hope that things will settle down later and the bookings will start coming in.

Now that LatL is back in action, it is good that all the

volunteers are filling the roles when the schools come. I am a member of a walking group and I have had two ex-teachers interested in becoming volunteers. Word of mouth is perhaps the best way of finding new people. I would like to use our volunteer meeting to look at the ways to motivate people to join, and I know that Mike Lansdown has been trying to capture feedback on this.

Thank you all for your help and support for LatL.

Rob Moore

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.

Festival 2023

Just a brief report on where we are with our annual planning cycle for the next Festival, which is on May 20th and 21st 2023.

Going into 2023 the Festival finances, like all of our own personal finances, are under a bit of pressure. All our main infrastructure costs have increased, some significantly, so we are still working to secure the funding to bring the event in at breakeven. We are looking at saving costs where we can, for example, by moving to using plastic trackway. This is slightly cheaper to hire but, more importantly, is not attractive to metal thieves and so does not need to be insured for a costly premium. Also, the only reason we have security on site on the Wednesday night is that's when the trackway goes in, so we may also have a saving here. We are still working with sponsors to bridge the budget gap and will probably be doing this for several months to come.

Most of the infrastructure is confirmed, but there may be some changes to how we run the Environment Fair area. Discussions are underway about moving from having a single large marquee to more small gazebos, which, again, would save us a considerable sum. Plans for this are still at an early stage so a lot is to be finalised.

We are also still to confirm our major sponsor for the Environment Fair area so the

entertainment in this area is fairly fluid at the moment.

We are also looking to transition the arrangements for the beer tent franchise (very important I hear you say!). Tim Setchell has been running the beer tent for a very long time and certainly as long as I have been involved in helping run the event. The 2022 Festival was his last year running the event as a franchise holder, and we are looking to bring another local company in with Tim mentoring them this year. We are still to confirm the arrangements, but, hopefully, a new local business will look after this 'much appreciated' part of the Festival for many years to come.

In light of the increases in costs for everyone, we are also trying to maintain our pricing as far as possible for all the small businesses that come and trade at the event. We just need to cover our costs so we do not open at a loss, and if we can do this through a combination of cost savings, fair franchise fees,

grants and sponsorship, we can do our bit to help small businesses in these difficult times. Our income comes from the donations our army of volunteers helps us collect, so this is where we hope people will be as generous as they can afford. The booking process started as usual for our traders and boaters on the 2nd January 2023.

The event only works with the support of all our wonderful volunteers, and I know Pam will be starting to look for help completing her volunteer rota in the first quarter of 2023. You probably know the only way she will be satisfied is if you agree to help, so please keep some time free on the weekend of 20th and 21st May. Your volunteering is essential to keep this much-loved community event one of the best family occasions in the Three Rivers area.

David Montague



Main stage at Festival 2022

Our Future Plans

Since becoming a trustee in 2021, I've always been keen to understand the bigger picture of how the RWT functions and where it is trying to get to, strategically. Day-to-day operational issues have tended to dominate the agenda since I joined, exacerbated by the many twists and turns that the pandemic brought us and which required the full attention of the trustees to ensure we both survived and emerged in good shape.

I was therefore delighted when the appointment of three new trustees and the return to normal encouraged us to hold a strategy workshop to focus our attention on our longer-term future and ensure our priorities and plans were consistent with this. Our sustainability as an organisation is clearly a crucial responsibility for the trustee board, as is assurance that our activities are consistent with the aims of the Trust. These, just in case you are unaware, are: 'to excite and inform the community about the environment, history and heritage of the waterways, and show how they can be enjoyed today.'

During the course of a morning in October, we explored ideas, had some robust discussions, agreed and disagreed (always a healthy aspect of any team to avoid 'group think') and arrived at a firmer shared understanding of both our

strategy and what we needed to do in order to make it happen. All in all, it felt like time well spent, and we will be repeating the exercise in March 2023, both to monitor our progress and to once again look ahead.

As a trust, we are in a fortunate position with a strong balance sheet, an excellent group of volunteers (numbering almost 100), and some great assets – the Education Centre, the Lock Centre, and the boats. Just as importantly, there are many less tangible things to celebrate such as the expertise to put on a major event like the Rickmansworth Canal Festival and the relationships we have with the local community. It is our responsibility as a trustee board to make sure we don't waste these and, indeed, that we get the maximum value from them.

The intention here is not to describe the details of our decisions, nor the breadth of our discussions; however, there are a couple of major items we hope to bring to fruition over the next 6–12 months that are worth drawing attention to.

Firstly, we have almost finalised the purchase of an additional trip boat. This will give us more resilience to cope with incidents such as the one this summer when engine failure rendered the Pride of Batchworth (our existing trip boat) unusable for a number of weeks during our busiest time of year. It also presents the possibility of us offering charter trips and short ferry trips in parallel, which will serve our passengers much better and bring in additional revenue. We need this both to cover the rising costs we face along with every other organisation in the UK and also to ensure we can continue to

develop and offer other ongoing activities such as education sessions for schools.

Secondly, we recognise the need to improve our digital presence on the web and through social media. This is not an area in which we have invested over recent years; our ability to promote the Trust more widely and improve the interaction with our many supporters and customers is clearly a significant opportunity that we believe is an absolute necessity for the future.

On both these fronts – watch this space. The (relatively) easy part is agreeing what we need to do; the proof of the pudding is in actually doing it. We plan to bring about noticeable change that will continue to develop us as a trust and provide an even firmer basis for our success as an organisation for the foreseeable future.

If you feel you want to help or are curious to know more, please get in touch. We know we haven't got all the answers or have all the skills required; therefore, offers, suggestions and comments are gratefully received.

Asher Rickayzen

RWT's Christmas Tree

"A Little piece of art to warm your heart"

This is the strapline on all the cards, magnets and key rings that you see in the Canal Centre. They are painted by Urszula Gudiens, a talented lady who volunteers for us, as well as kindly making and donating merchandise for us to sell. Her husband, Tony, now works for us too, in the Canal Centre. They are a very energetic couple.

When I heard that there was to be a Christmas Tree Festival at St Mary's Church, guess who I thought of to help us. It was very short notice, but Urszula agreed straightaway. She set about cutting and glueing, printing and laminating and persuaded a friend to lend us a tree.

I think that our exhibit was the largest on display. It certainly imparted a lot of information about our charity, as the baubles told snippets about RWT. Canal-ware mugs adorned our tree. Our slot in the Church was next to a notice board, so we stuck up photos and pamphlets too. A win-win situation.

This was only the second time that a festival like this has been

held at St Mary's. Sue Hillier, a veteran RWT volunteer, organises it. What a great idea. Organisations from around the community of Rickmansworth can exhibit their tree and promote their organisation at the same time. When we were decorating RWT's tree, the lady from Running Sisters tried to recruit me to her running club! (I was so busy laughing that I didn't think to recruit her to RWT.)

Many people visited St Mary's over Christmas. Maybe some new visitors will come to Batchworth having seen our display.

Pam Paterson (trustee)



Tony Gudiens, Pam Paterson, RWT's tree, Ursula Gudiens, Sue Hillier

Ricky School Comms Team

As part of RWT's efforts to promote itself and its activities, we have teamed up with a small group of interested Year 12 students from Rickmansworth School. So far we have had two meetings - the first held at the school, the second at the Education Centre down at Batchworth Lock.

At the first meeting, David Montague and Mike Lansdown explained the need for the Trust to make better use of social media in order to make the public, especially

those people living locally, more aware of what we do and how they can make more use of what we can offer. We admitted to being less than expert at the use of social media and recognised that they may have a lot to offer in terms of helping us make much better use of channels such as Instagram, TikTok, and our existing website. We also stressed some of the advantages getting involved with a local charity may have for them and their CVs.

At the second meeting (attended by three of the five, plus a member of staff), Mark explained what he does as General Manager and Mike showed them around the site. Following the short 'tour', Mike led a discussion of how they could improve our use of Instagram and what this might entail for the students and for us as RWT volunteers.

A third meeting has now been

timetabled for January at which Deane and Mike will be given training on how Instagram can be used more effectively. Good luck to both of them!

Any developments gained here will be added to those suggestions made by Asher as part of the newly formed 'Communications Team'.

Mike Lansdown

Now Recruiting Mark's Successor

I'm sure many of you are aware that sadly, in August 2023, Mark will be leaving RWT for pastures new - more likely canals new but that doesn't have the same ring to it! He's done an outstanding job in his role as General Manager and has helped to mould the Trust into the vibrant and respected

organisation it is today.

We're now looking for a suitable person to take over from Mark. It's a very hands on role and we need someone who is practical, organised, has a good sense of humour, is a good team worker and preferably has some knowledge of, or experience with, boats. If you think this might be the job for you or you know someone who may be interested we'd love to hear from you. You can email enquiries@rwt.org.uk, ring 07875 393703 or talk to Mark or any of the trustees to get further details.

This is a great opportunity for someone. There are few offices nicer than the canal and the

environment around Batchworth Lock on a sunny day.

David Montague

Photo Captions

hydraulic transmission problem had been fixed so I was thinking, 'here we go again'. The Pride was pulled back to its mooring, the passengers safely disembarked, and their money was refunded.

turn off things that are not on the shutdown list for Pride as others may not check these when opening up the boat!

Not so much a photo caption this issue, since Mark says that all our volunteers have become wary of the hidden cameras around Batchworth! Just a story on how my Sunday afternoon and that night's sleep were compromised by a single phone call!

After a day of not doing Trust work, I got a phone call from one of our volunteers to say that, following a successful charter earlier in the day, the Pride departed on a ferry trip and suddenly broke down, when just leaving the mooring point, and refused to start. This was after the major

On Monday morning, after a troubled night's sleep, I called Mark and he immediately replied that the Pride was up and running again. He reported that the 'breakdown' had been caused by a lack of fuel, as the fuel switches on the outbound and return lines had both been closed when the boat was shut down after the charter. These are in the cabin just under the gallery counter near the floor, and one of the volunteers, when closing up after the charter, had been very efficient in turning everything off.

So problem solved and my Monday night's sleep was much better! The lesson is not to



Fuel valves open – Pride works, customers happy and I get a good night sleep.



Fuel valves closed – Pride does not work, customers disappointed and I am very grumpy the next day!

Sadie and the Snow Person

We did manage to capture one noteworthy event on camera this winter: Sadie's new friendship with a rather snowy customer! Here they are on top of our boat.





Upcoming Events

Saturday 29th April-Monday 1st May 2023 - Roger at Little Venice

Saturday 20th-Sunday 21st May 2023 - Rickmansworth Festival

July 2023 (date TBC) - RWT AGM at Batchworth Lock Education Centre

End of July (date TBC) - Roger at Denham Country Park Festival

Saturday 3rd December (TBC) - Canalside Carols at Batchworth

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