



# The Batchworth Telegraph

Newsletter of the Friends, Winter 2023

## Festival 2024 Cancelled



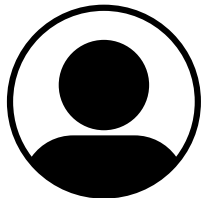
Photo by Hannah Crick

### Inside

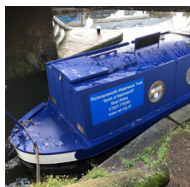
Our  
Chairman  
Speaks...



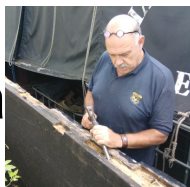
Meet the  
Trustees



The Spirit  
of  
Batchworth



Roger and  
Coniophora  
Puteana





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Hertfordshire, WD3 1JJ

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Company number 2674596.  
Registered Charity No 1024322

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## RWT Trustees

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Paul Childerhouse  
Marie Gillen  
Mike Lansdown  
Steve Mander  
Les Mead  
David Montague (Chairman and  
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Asher Rickayzen  
Deane Symes  
Stephen Vincent

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Warwick Gainsborough  
Clive Pelerin

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# Chairman's Chat...

Welcome to the winter issue of the Batchworth Telegraph for 2023.

This year has been one of extensive change and improvement for Rickmansworth Waterways Trust, and it looks like this trend will continue in 2024!

By the time you read this, our new General Manager, Warwick, will have been in post for over six months, and I hope you all agree he has stepped up to the role very well! He had a bit of a baptism of fire with a really busy charter operation in midsummer, when finding the needed number of crew proved challenging, but Warwick has now settled into the job. Thank you to all our volunteers for making him feel very welcome and supporting him through the steep learning curve of the wide range of activities that make up his role. I know he has identified many things he would like to improve and change so, hopefully, during 2024, his list of projects will start to shrink rather than grow!

During 2023 we brought into full operation our second trip boat, the Spirit of Batchworth, which brings a major improvement to our capability. Steve Mander has written an article later in this edition which describes its journey from operating in London to taking its place in RWT Oxford Blue with the Pride of Batchworth. Not only does this give us increased capacity to run both charters and short trips at the same time, it gives us resilience to any reliability issues with either of the trip boats. We



demonstrated this ably this summer when the Spirit experienced some minor electrical faults which were ably rectified by local boater and electrician, Joe Hone, while the Pride was used to continue our operations. Running two trip boats does present challenges, and we rely on our volunteer skippers even more to ensure we can support the dual demand for charters and trips. We are always looking for more skippers and crew, so if you know anyone who would like to complete the training, now is the time to get involved, while demand is lower in the winter months.

We have made major improvements to our social media exposure thanks to Asher, Les and a new addition to our social media team, local boater, Sophie Scott. We are now using software which allows us to schedule a diary of posts so we can plan releases into the future. This means that each day a different post can be pushed to our channels which is relevant to our events calendar and the time of year. This has already resulted in more people being aware of our activities and one post promoting Christmas cards resulted in us selling out very quickly and needing to reorder! By the time of the Carol Service, we had sold out again! We have also invested in signs in the Aquadrome and near the Premier Inn, which encourages people to come and visit us.



# Chairman's Chat Continued...

You will be aware that we are in the middle of a project to refurbish the Lock Centre, which needed some major updating after over 30 years of heavy use. We have already completed the plumbing and electrical work and, hopefully, you will have seen the new toilet! There is still a way to go with decorating being planned in the New Year, a deep clean and sealing of the floor, purchase and fitting of a new tambour cupboard, new kitchen units for our volunteers' coffee point, a bigger ice cream freezer, and a new desk and other carpentry constructed by a skilled volunteer carpenter, Peter Plested. By the time we get to Easter we hope all the work will be complete and the area will be much better for our customers and, importantly, a better environment for our volunteers to work in. Deane is also working on improving our retail offering to provide some new merchandise for our customers, so lots of changes are afoot!

Asher reports later in this issue on a project underway to develop a new website to give us improved capabilities, which should launch sometime in 2024. We are also planning to commission a solar panel installation on the Education Centre roof, complete with battery storage. This was something we considered when we constructed the building, but it was not financially possible

at that time. It will mean we, hopefully, have minimal electricity costs for running the centre and will also be able to sell excess power back to the grid.

The last three projects, the Lock Centre refurbishment, new website and solar panels have only been made possible by the generous patronage of Douglas Paterson who has enabled so many developments at RWT over recent years. Douglas, you have made a real difference to our charity, and much of what we have achieved has only been possible with your support. You have the sincere thanks of all the trustees and volunteers!

After a quieter than usual year, Rob is hoping our education programme, Learning at the Lock, will be better attended in 2024 than it was in 2023. The number of school bookings this year was impacted by industrial action, and 2024 already has more confirmed bookings than I can remember for this time of year. The schools love using the Spirit as it gives them a much better experience to see the waterside environment and provides more space for the children and our volunteers.

Roger has been the subject of extensive work on the engine thanks to Clive and Bob, and Martin has been working on repairs to the hull. Clive will report on all the challenges of working on the Lister engine in a later issue! Martin has been working on the gunnels, aiming to prevent any further rot encroaching into the side planks before our next scheduled docking at the end of 2024. Roger is a key part of the Trust's heritage and we are committed to its continued conservation as a

unique piece of local living history. We also want to ensure we use the boat more regularly, so there will be many opportunities to get involved in boating later in 2024.

We also welcome a new trustee, Sandy Bell, who has taken over from Tina as our Finance Director. Sandy has recently retired and crossed the road from Mercer and Hole to take on a role with RWT. He has examined our accounts in our annual report for many years so knows us really well, and we welcome him to our team!

So, there's a lot going on with many changes to what we do and many opportunities to get involved! All the work is aimed at ensuring we continue to improve what we do, meet our charitable objectives and make RWT a great place to volunteer. Many thanks to all our dedicated volunteers, the trustees, Rob, and Warwick for all their hard work. I hope you take the time to enjoy the holiday season with your friends and family, and I look forward to a great New Year.

Best regards,

David Montague

# Warwick's Write-Up



Well, here I am writing to you six months into the job. I hope by now I have met the vast majority of you; I can honestly say I'm really enjoying working with such a great group of talented and friendly people. Thanks to all of you for the support you've given me so far – long may it continue! As I said recently at the annual coffee morning, I've certainly joined the Trust at an exciting time. The first summer with two boats went well, thanks to all the boat skippers and crew coming together, especially in the second, busy half of the summer when we had quite a few charter obligations to meet. It was great to see that virtually all the feedback we received from our customers was so positive. This is entirely down to the great customer service and professionalism of all our crews.

I've also been involved in the tendering process for our new website, and I'm looking forward to seeing how, with new technology, we can move the Trust forward by providing a superior user experience for our volunteers. On a similar theme, we now have an expert in social media on our team, and it's great to see that the quality of our posts should now enable us to reach a wider and more diverse audience.

Perhaps of even more significance is the refurbishment of the Canal Centre. As I write, I've taken a break from wiping up the dust

left over from the electrical upgrade, but for those who work in the Centre, please remember that a little mess now will be worth it in the long term. The new toilet is already a vast improvement. I'm currently exploring a new point of sale system for next year so we don't have a till and card machine that don't talk to one another! I'm really confident that by the spring we will have a canal centre less in keeping with the 19th century and much more like the 21st. In short, a more enjoyable and rewarding place to spend your time in.

As I sign off for now, I hope you all had a happy Christmas and wish you all a healthy 2024. May the support continue over the next six months, and hopefully I'll soon be giving you all an update in the next edition of the Batchworth Telegraph.

Warwick Gainsborough

# 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.

# Rob Reports



When all through Batchworth, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. Apologies to Clement C. Moore (no relation) for this parody of the opening line to the famous poem/story 'Twas the Night Before Christmas', but I was told by my English teacher at school that I need to have an engaging first line to hold the reader's attention when writing an article! At the time of writing, Christmas is coming, so a Christmassy vibe would not be out of place. Apologies, also, to the many people who are more than just 'stirring' at Batchworth. Work is being done all year round.

From a personal point of view, it may seem that not much is stirring because I am not down at Batchworth in the winter anything like as much as I am in the summer. The last Learning at the Lock (LatL) session was in early November, which is quite late for a booking, and, fortunately, the weather was so good that the children could have their lunch out on the terrace. The last school came from Wing, near Tring. A look at the school website revealed a detailed account of the visit in the school newsletter. I hope other schools peek at rival school websites and see ideas for visits. The class of Year 6 children is older than most of the classes that come to visit us. The teacher said there were 39 children, which gave us quite a challenge. The experience of having a breakdown on the boat has given an opportunity to add

an art activity to the programme, and the school hall has examples of canal roses on paper plates decorating the wall.

Most of my time has been booking schools for next spring and summer. Last year was very disappointing with only 18 bookings. If I think of all the possible reasons for this and ask schools why this was so, the probable answer would be 'All of the above', but, whatever happened then, it seems that schools are ready to come back as I have ten bookings so far. I am amazed that many volunteers are ready to commit to dates so far ahead in the next year. I fully understand that not every volunteer can do this, and I will certainly be sending out pleas for help nearer the time if volunteers are needed. Whenever a new booking is confirmed, the new date is emailed to the LatL volunteers, and the schedule is attached with a traffic light colour code to show how many have come forward. A red colour means that more volunteers are needed, yellow means I need one more and green means there are enough volunteers for the school visit. I very rarely have to tell a volunteer they are not needed – something I do not like having to do – so I am grateful to people who keep coming back. LatL is attracting some new and potential volunteers, which is very encouraging.

One job that has to be done at the end of the LatL season is 'putting Roger to bed'. This involves taking any moveable objects, including the soft furnishings out of the cabin. This

work was previously done by Fabian and Pat Hiscock. I have been concerned that the decorative lace that is attached on 'gimp pins' around the ceiling of the cabin would need some specialised cleaning. I have asked a few people about this but had no confident answers. This year, in my enthusiasm to store all the moveable items from 'Roger', I included the tiller. A short while after this, I had urgent emails from Clive Pelerin and Bob Patey looking for it. When Clive retrieved the tiller he noticed the lace trimming and offered to clean them. Fantastic! Bob and Clive are offering trips on the Roger to keep the engine running. They give an excellent account of the mysteries that lie in the huge heap of metal in the engine room later on in this issue.

Rob Moore



# Festival 2024 Cancelled

Representatives from the Rickmansworth Festival Team attended a meeting hosted by Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) just before Christmas regarding the recent implementation of an Asbestos Management Plan for the Aquadrome.

The plan has designated the Aquadrome as a no dig zone, so nothing can penetrate the ground on the site. This includes digging, raking, staking or any activity which could erode or expose anything below the ground surface. It would preclude the use of stakes for fixing marquees or gazebos, and any vehicle movements on the grassed areas of the site would also be a concern. Any

hirer of the ground would also need to pay for appropriate monitoring before and after the event at a cost of between £5,000 and £8,000 per day for two days of monitoring (a total of £10 - £16k).

Whilst it is possible to fix structures in place with weights or large water barrels, this is really suited to working on a hard site when lifting vehicles can be used and access is not compromised by soft ground. Our Festival site manager has confirmed that, whilst anything is possible, the costs and extra labour required would go up significantly if we considered this option on the site. There may also be other requirements such as ensuring all contractors were trained.

Therefore I am afraid Rickmansworth Waterways Trust has had no choice but to make the difficult decision to cancel the event for 2024. No Festival will be possible with these

requirements in place.

TRDC stated that they were happy for the Festival to go ahead as long as the conditions of the management plan could be met. However, the reality is that the management plan makes it impossible for a non commercial, volunteer-led Festival to proceed with an event that uses the Aquadrome.

This is a really sad day for our community, and I feel for all the other charities, community organisations and small businesses that have lost an opportunity to promote themselves. Thank you for all your help over many years since our very first event in 1993 and for contributing towards a great event. It will be sadly missed.

David Montague



Photo by Hannah Crick



# Our Volunteers

For many years, RWT has thrown a garden party in the summer and a coffee morning in November as a way to say thank you to all our brilliant volunteers. The latest coffee morning was its usual noisy and sociable success, though some regular Cafe Nero customers not involved with the Trust wouldn't necessarily agree with this!

RWT is indeed very fortunate to have so many delightful and talented volunteers, and it's felt that it would be beneficial all-round if they were able to have more input into what we do and how we do it. So, Marie and I have now

taken on the role of volunteer liaison. We held an initial meeting on 25th November to get a feel for how everyone felt we should do this. It was well attended and vibrant with much discussion and resulted in a list of initial actions, such as replacing the Canal Centre key safe with a bigger one that could hold all three keys. The meeting ended with a presentation from our Chairman on the proposed improvements to the canal centre. Those of you who give your time to manning it will no doubt be relieved to hear that a new and efficient heater has already been installed behind the desk, so you're no longer in danger of developing hypothermia in the winter!

It was agreed that the volunteer meetings should be held quarterly, and the next one is

on 18th January 2024 at 11.00 am. If you want to come a little earlier, coffee (RWT style) and pastries (aka biscuits) will be available from 10.45 am. This meeting is for all our volunteers, and it would be lovely to see you. If you have an item you'd like to be discussed, please let Warwick know before the meeting so he can put it on the agenda.

I hope you all had a lovely Christmas and I wish you all a Happy New Year. Finally, I'd like to thank all our volunteers for all their good-natured hard work during 2023 and for enabling RWT to be such a well-respected local resource and charity.

Chris Burridge



Photo by Les Mead



# Meet the Trustees



**David Montague**

David has been an RWT volunteer for 25 years and the Chairman since 2012. He's the Director of the Festival, volunteers in the Canal Centre and at Learning at the Lock and is a skipper on the Pride, the Spirit and Roger. David is also involved in many other areas of the Trust.



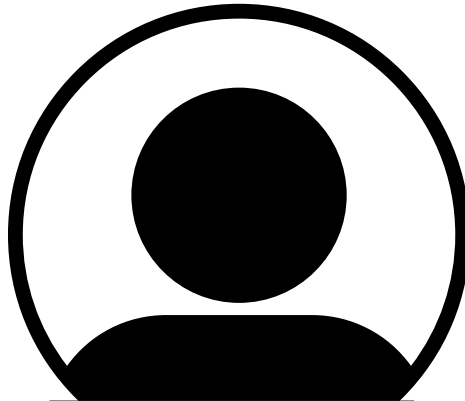
**Marie Gillen**

Marie had been a volunteer for several years before becoming a trustee in 2022. She is a skipper on both the Pride and the Spirit, a member of the Operations Group and Boat Maintenance Group, has responsibility for dealing with boat related issues and assists with skipper training. Marie is also involved with volunteer liaison.



**Chris Burridge**

Chris has been a trustee for 12 years and currently chairs our Operations Group, helps in the Canal Centre and is responsible for Safeguarding. She's recently taken on the new role of Volunteer Liaison.



**Paul Childerhouse**

Paul has a liaison role with other local charities and community groups. (No photo available)



**Sandy Bell**

Sandy became a trustee in October 2023 and has responsibility for overseeing all financial matters including line-managing RWT's volunteer Treasurer, Andy Holmes. Sandy has been the Independent Examiner of RWT's year-end accounts since 2009.



**Mike Lansdown**

Mike has been a trustee since 2018. He's a Learning at the Lock (LatL) volunteer, the line-manager for RWT's Education Manager, Rob Moore and contributes to documentation relating to LatL. Mike is a skipper on both the Pride and the Spirit and has recently become responsible for Health and Safety.



# Meet the Trustees continued...



**Steve Mander**

Steve has been a trustee for 9 years. He's the Sponsorship Manager for the Festival and its Deputy Director. He's the line-manager for RWT's new General Manager, Warwick. Steve is also a skipper on both the Pride and the Spirit and is involved with skipper training.



**Asher Rickayzen**

Asher was a volunteer for several years before becoming a trustee during COVID. He's responsible for the Trust's strategy, is a skipper on both the Pride and the Spirit and is part of the team organising the entertainment at the Festival. Asher has recently set up RWT's social media team and is working on increasing public awareness of RWT and all we have to offer.



**Steve Vincent**

Steve has been a trustee for 11 years and is responsible for data management, particularly relating to personal information about volunteers. He maintains the RWT's supporters database and is responsible for the boaters mail service. Steve is a member of the Operations Group and a skipper on both the Pride and the Spirit.



**Les Mead**

Les has been a trustee for nine years. He's a member of RWT's social media team, busy filming and editing projects and helping to expand the Trust's social media platform. He's the point of contact for Three Rivers Museum and others and offers Health and Safety advice/support to Mike when required.



**Dean Symes**

Deane has been a trustee since 2022 and was a volunteer before that. He's responsible for the merchandise and sales opportunities in the Canal Centre and is currently assisting with its planned refurbishment. He's also a Canal Centre volunteer, a skipper on both the Pride and the Spirit and a member of the Boat Maintenance Group.



**Beryl Whittaker**

For about 13 years, Beryl has been RWT's Company Secretary, ensuring the Trust complies with its legal duties for Company Law, the Charity Commission and our own governing documents. She's responsible for issuing the preparation papers, minutes and actions for trustee meetings and volunteers in the Canal Centre.

# The Spirit of Batchworth

Over the last few years, there has been talk and discussions about the replacement of the Pride of Batchworth. Should the Trust become environmentally friendly and buy an electric boat? Well, having looked at and driven a number of boats, it was felt that none were likely to fulfil all our requirements and were proving to be somewhat unreliable.

The Trust was left with a dilemma. We had been very successful in our fundraising for a new boat but now had to reassess what it was we wanted. While this was going on, Mark Saxon, through his contacts in London, found out that a small firm that ran party boats out of Kings Cross wanted to sell their boats.

A party of trustees and Mark went to investigate and view the boat that was thought to best suit our needs. The boat in question proved to fit the bill for the RWT charter business, and it was decided to bring it up to Batchworth and trial it on our stretch of the waterways.

On a not very nice day, Mark and two intrepid skippers, Steve Mander and Martin Hart, went to Kings Cross to collect the boat. We were helped by the previous owner to understand the intricacies of the vessel, and soon after we commenced our journey back to Batchworth.

Travelling the Regents Canal was a wonderful change from

our normal stomping ground and introduced us lesser mortals to tunnels. London has changed dramatically over the years, and this is just an example of how housing tastes have changed.



These were once gasometers, but I digress.

We broke the journey at Uxbridge and left the boat overnight in the marina (see below).

The next day's cruising was equally enjoyable, and we soon arrived back at Batchworth and tried to answer the vital question: can we turn our prospective boat in the lock pound? It is four

feet longer than Pride, and after several attempts, we decided that we could but only if the water level was high enough. So skippers had to polish up on their reversing technique, which has proved something the boat and skippers are very good at.

Once back, a skipper training programme was set up and proved very successful, with the majority of RWT volunteer skippers taking to the boat with some ease.

Before we could use the boat for RWT charters, the boat needed to be given the correct name. Now this may seem to be a simple thing but, in order to not upset Poseidon, one has to follow a prescribed ceremony.

Not wishing to upset the water gods, RWT performed the ceremony on 11th March, and the boat emerged with the name the Spirit of Batchworth.



Our new boat in Uxbridge marina



# The Spirit of Batchworth continued...

With a newly christened boat and a group of skippers, all was ready for the start of the season at the Rickmansworth Festival. Here the boat proved very successful, and the ability to remove the sides was welcome in the warm weather (see below).

During the rest of the year, the Spirit has proved her worth. She has rarely been out of use, having carried out around 50 charters this year. At the end of the summer holidays, the Spirit carried out nine charters in 11 days. We have had several comments on how much space there is and how safe families feel, especially



The naming ceremony

those with small children. We have carried our maximum number of 12 on many occasions and have also undertaken romantic cruises for just two people.

The boat has been a good asset for the Trust, and now that the

Spirit is decked out in her new true colours, she will truly raise the profile of the Rickmansworth Waterways Trust in the coming years.

Steve Mander



The Spirit of Batchworth with the sides down



# The Spirit of Batchworth continued...



The Spirit of Batchworth in her new clothes





# Website Revamp and Social Media

During these dark winter days, a small team from the RWT have been busy planning a major revamp of the RWT website. The current site has served us well over many years, but the technology it's built with, the look and feel, and the range of functionality it provides could all do with modernisation.

It's a major project for the Trust and one the trustees have been willing to support with funding; we recognise the website is a key part of the organisation, and we see lots of opportunities for communicating better and offering a wider range of online services.

You may have noticed that throughout the last few months, the RWT social media team have made progress in improving our presence on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and TikTok. This initiative has been very successful and we need to ensure our website keeps pace with the expectations this has created. For example, we have begun to receive requests from our followers to be able to purchase goods online, something which is not possible with our existing website.

The website upgrade project is currently at a point where we are selecting the suppliers to develop the new site. The selection process has considered both the technical capability of the provider and the design expertise available; we feel we need guidance in this area, given the importance of the aesthetics to the usability of the site.

A major part of the new site will be the ability for people to book boat trips online, something

which currently can only be done on the phone or by visiting the Lock Centre. Offering this online effectively extends our opening times, which we hope will give us more passengers.

All being well, we expect the new site to go live in the first half of 2024. We will probably introduce new functionality progressively to allow it to bed down effectively before we add more.

Overall, it's a significant strategic endeavour for us that we hope will bring considerable benefits to everyone who engages with RWT, whether they are a volunteer or a member of the public. These are exciting times - watch this space for more news as the project progresses!

Asher Rickayzen

# Not Your Usual AGM

Most AGMs are fairly boring affairs. Long reports, tedious discussions and difficulty in finding a quorum. RWT, of course, is different. Ours are fun!

2023's AGM on 18th July was especially enjoyable. Nearly 60 trustees, volunteers and friends packed into the Education Centre. The business part of the evening was conducted by our efficient chairman in under an

hour.

The reason for such a large turnout was that five important RWT personnel were finishing their duties - Tina Berry-Chmiel as Finance Director, myself as trustee, Jillian Christensen as Charters Manager, Nik Bennett as Treasurer and Mark Saxon as General Manager. They were all presented with small gifts as mementoes. Mark will treasure his portrait and book of special comments from all his friends at the Canal. He didn't give us a resume of his ten years (phew!) but assured us that the Trust was to be in good hands with Warwick.

Mention was made of the fact that everyone in the room, whether trustee or hour-long bucket shaker on Festival day, worked. People pull their weight in our charity. It is a privilege and a pleasure to be involved.

Prosecco served, canapes snaffled, another enjoyable event in RWT's year.

Pam Paterson

# Roger and Coniophora Puteana

Not Roger (Nosey) Parker, the legendary volunteer from the 1980s, and a nasty fungal infection, but "Roger" our wooden heritage narrowboat and...wet rot.

Back at the end of September, Clive Pelerin, who, together with Bob Patey, has been dealing with the mechanics/engine of Roger, contacted me about some evidence of wet rot on the gunwale of Roger and asked me if it was "something you can sort out".

Mark Saxon had, in the past, treated the area with Wet Rot Wood Hardener, but no further work had been done.

The cause of the rot was water getting trapped between the covers and the gunwale; the covers had been secured by screwing down battens onto the gunwale and then bedded on to mastic.

Fabian and Jemm Bates came down to inspect, and we discussed how we would approach the work and see to what extent it had affected the wood/gunwale.

After that assessment, Marie and I started chopping out the obvious areas back to sound timber with chisels and rotary wood rasps. The wood rasps only chewed out the rotten wood, almost dust-like in some places, and it soon became apparent the rot had

extended further than its original areas. The areas cut out were treated with two coats of fungicide and allowed to dry out.

The rough-cut areas were then squared off and cut, (see pictures) and again treated with fungicide ready for inserts (graving pieces)

We have plenty of hardwood strips (Oak, Teak) in the workshop, 1cm by up to 6cm breadth and a few metres long. This is wood I have and use for repairs on my own 12-foot Clinker Rowing Boat; these will be used as graving pieces, (inserts) to be put in the areas cut out.



Digging out the rot



# Roger and Coniophora Puteana Continued...

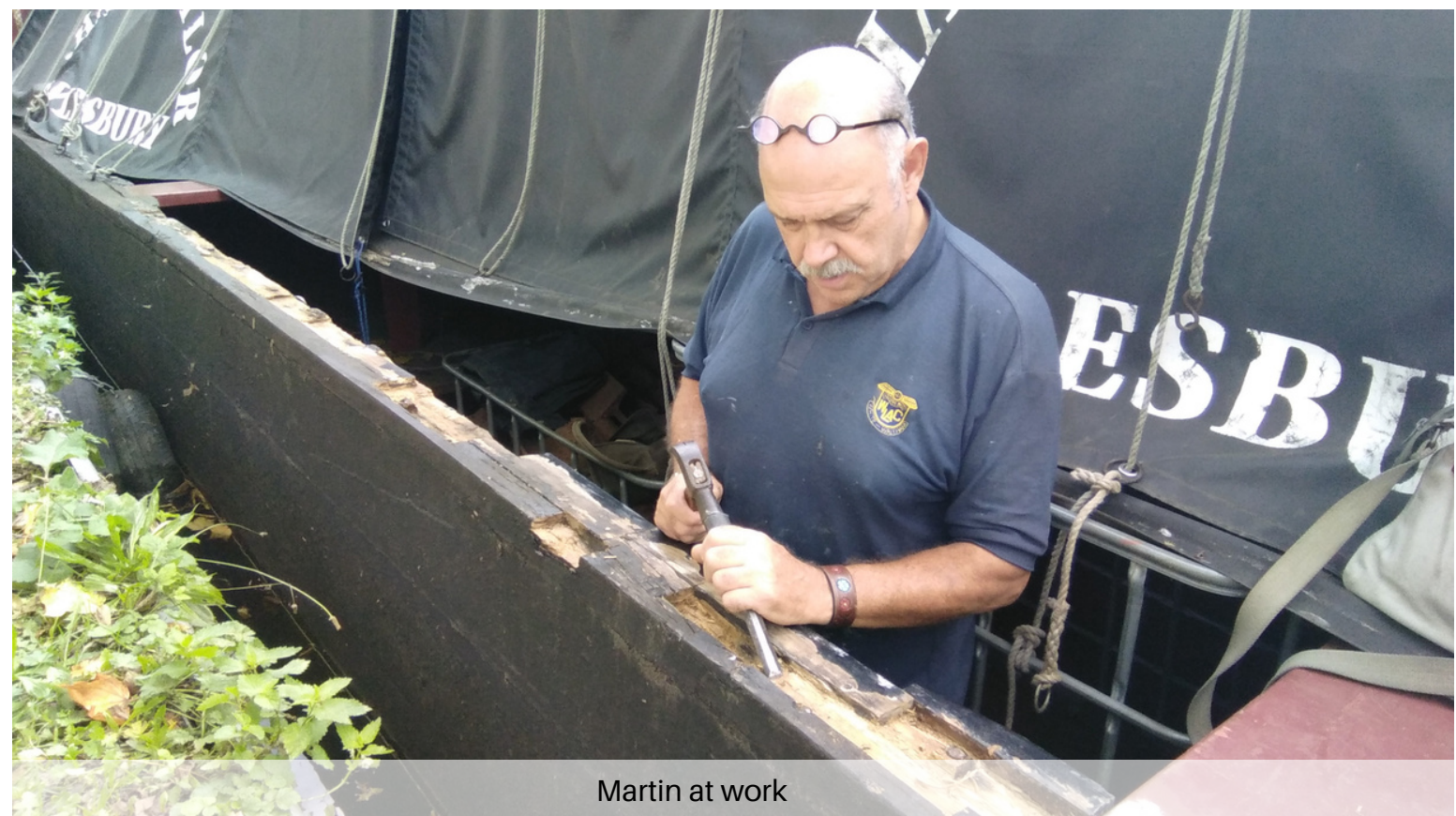
At the moment, the weather has stopped me from carrying on the work. Rain had been getting on the areas cut out, and a power supply using three extension leads is needed for saws, etc., so I have secured the sheets on the outside of Roger, temporarily; this keeps the rain off so the wood can dry out.

The next job is to get on board and start cutting wood strips to suit the cut-out areas - some bitumen paint has been painted onto the bare wood areas. It is then a case of bedding in with mastic, screwing it down and finishing off as best as possible.

Martin Stokes.



Ready for inserts



Martin at work





# Upcoming Events

Saturday 4th-Monday 6th May 2024 - **Roger at Little Venice**

July 2024 (date TBC) - **RWT AGM at Batchworth Lock Education Centre**

Saturday 2nd December (TBC) - **Canalside Carols at Batchworth**

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[www.rwt.org.uk](http://www.rwt.org.uk)