

**The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame was published in 1908.**

After his mother died, Kenneth and his siblings were sent to live with their Granny Ingles and their uncle David, their mother's twin, in a spacious house called The Mount in Cookham Dean. There they learned to love the river, boating and the 'wild woods'. When grown up, Kenneth returned to live in Cookham and told his own son bedtime stories about the Wild Wood, which is certainly Quarry Wood across the river from Marlow. These stories were eventually published as *The Wind in the Willows*.

### The Story - a summary



With the arrival of spring and fine weather outside, the good-natured Mole loses patience with spring cleaning. He flees his underground home, emerging to take in the air and ends up at the river, which he has never seen before. Here he meets Rat (a water vole), who at this time of year spends all his days in, on and close by the river. Rat takes Mole for a ride in his rowing boat. They get along well and spend many more days boating, with "Ratty" teaching Mole the ways of the river, with the two friends living together in Ratty's riverside home.

One summer day, Rat and Mole disembark near the grand Toad Hall and pay a visit to Toad. Toad is rich, jovial, friendly and kind-hearted, but aimless and conceited; he regularly becomes obsessed with

current fads, only to abandon them abruptly. Having recently given up boating, Toad's current craze is his horse-drawn caravan. He persuades the reluctant Rat and willing Mole to join him on a trip.

Toad soon tires of the realities of camp life, and sleeps in the following day to avoid chores. Later that day, a passing motor car scares the horse, causing the caravan to overturn into a ditch. Rat threatens to have the law on the car driver, while Mole calms the horse, but Toad's craze for caravan travel is immediately replaced by an obsession with motorcars.

Mole wants to meet the respected but elusive Badger, who lives deep in the Wild Wood (Winter Hill), but Rat - knowing that Badger does not appreciate visits - tells Mole to be patient and wait for Badger to pay them a visit himself. Nevertheless, on a snowy winter's day, while the seasonally somnolent Rat dozes, Mole impulsively goes to the Wild Wood to explore, hoping to meet Badger. He gets lost in the woods and hides under a tree, trying to stay warm. Eventually, the three characters do meet and attempt to rescue Toad from himself - but not before further adventures along the way.

Can you name the four principal figures of the story as shown here?



Henley's River and Rowing Museum have an excellent exhibition on this subject and a visit is highly recommended.

*This article is by David Part.*