

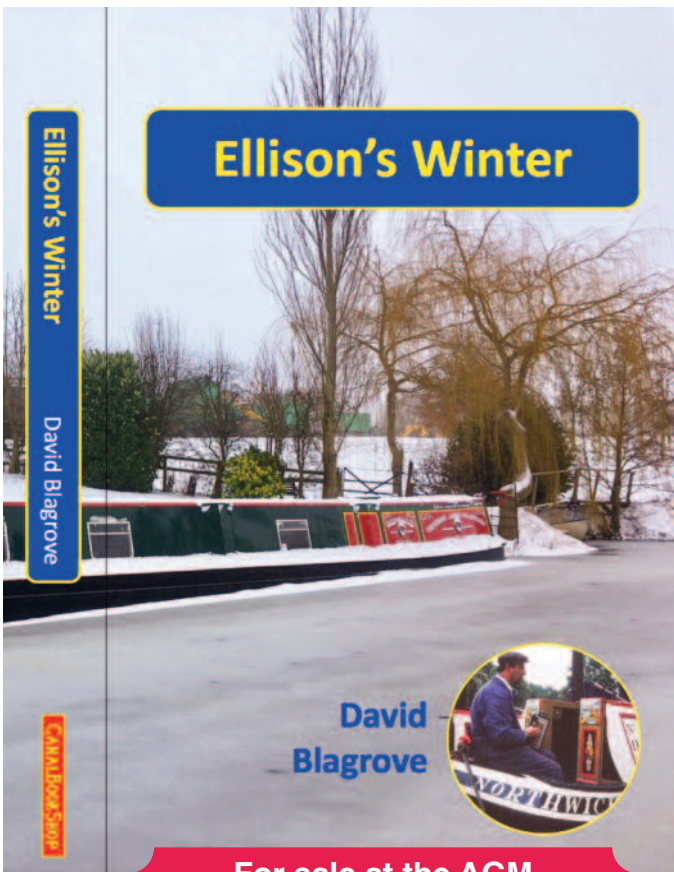
## Ellison's Winter

by David Blagrove

Published by the  
Canal Bookshop, 2020  
442pp,

**£13.95**

A new book by David Blagrove may come as a surprise to most people; sadly David passed away in 2016. However, a few years earlier he had given a copy of the original typescript to the editors, asking them to read and comment on the book – a task which extended into proof-reading and some editing. Unfortunately, further progress became lost among his many other interests and eventually his final illness. Some time after his passing, David's family sought to have the book published. Although written by David, it was originally intended to be published under a pseudonym. As the title suggests, it was also written as the first part of a series following the main character, Andrew, but the next volumes will not now be



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written. This book is a departure from David's more usual genre of autobiography or historical research as it is entirely a work of fiction, although based very much on his detailed knowledge of the midland canals and his legal experience.

The book follows the rapidly changing fortunes of the main character, Andrew, as he tries to rebuild his life after a series of misjudgements which culminated in a gaol sentence. A latent interest in canals spurs him into buying a narrow boat on which to live while he considers his next options but, all too soon, people from his past appear once more and threaten to destroy the future that he is building for himself. A complex web of plot and sub-plot leads the reader deeper into the story and an understanding of the characters as the narrative twists and turns through the many events, but always with a canal theme at its heart. The book, as written by David, resolves in one dramatic denouement all the many issues, except one... The end of the book is clearly intended to lead into the second book of the sequence and thus stops rather suddenly. In an attempt to remedy this, a coda or postscript has been added by the editors, to bring the book to a more complete ending.

This review is of course entirely honest (you would expect no less), but that same honesty requires the admission that the reviewer is also one of the editors. Observant readers may also notice that the boat shown on the book cover is well-known on the canal system and in previous years was often seen with David as chauffeur.

Paul Monahan