

TOBY SMITH

Environmental awareness bursary, 2013

After the government unveiled plans to build the high-speed railway, HS2, between London and Birmingham, debate evolved around the project: was it beneficial enough to justify its costs and the impact it would have on wildlife.

In response to these disputes, I walked the entire line from Euston to Birmingham New Street using government engineering documents as my guides, and capturing the

journey as I went. The project was published over eight pages in the *Sunday Times* magazine – a great opportunity to reach a wider audience. This, along with the Society bursary, really gave the project momentum and helped it take shape.

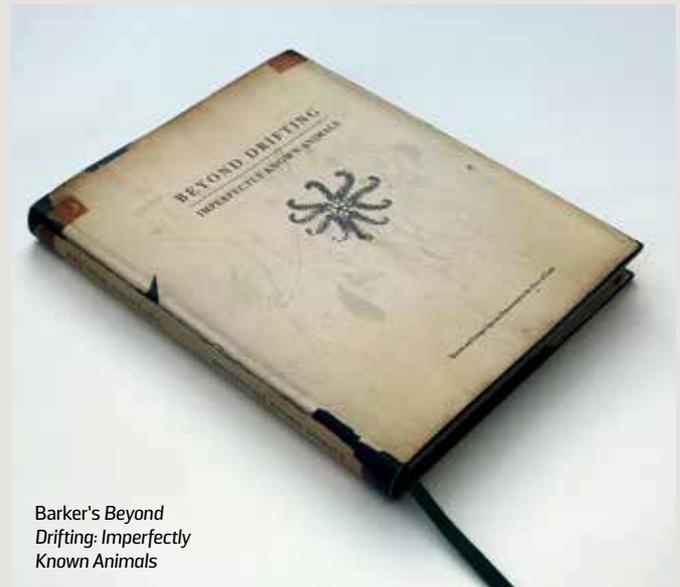
It hasn't been the most lucrative project I've worked on, but has been good for my profile. Journalists will sometimes approach me if they want someone to comment on

HS2, which for me is a good gauge of how successful a project is.

Recently I have been an artist in residence at the University of Cambridge Conservation Research Institute. This has allowed me to contribute to its work – which is very gratifying – including the project *Chasing Cuckoos*, which visualises the remote landscapes and people discovered on an expedition to the wintering grounds of satellite-tagged migratory cuckoos.



Two images from HS2: Walk the Line



Barker's *Beyond Drifting: Imperfectly Known Animals*

MANDY BARKER

Environmental awareness bursary, 2012

The bursary enabled me to go on a voyage across the north Pacific Ocean as part of a plastic research expedition on a small yacht with 11 other crew members. Basically it was a scientific expedition to collect and analyse the plastics that had entered the ocean as a result of the tsunami in 2011, off the coast of Japan.

During the voyage I met a fellow crew member called Tracy Reid. She did a presentation on the state of the

beaches in Hong Kong, and I was blown away by the amount of waste there was. So I realised, having seen this, that it would be my next project.

From meeting Tracy and seeing waste problems in Hong Kong, I went on to make my next series. So everything stemmed from that Society-sponsored voyage really.

I recently completed a book of my project *Beyond Drifting: Imperfectly Known Animals*. In this I show microscopic

images of marine plastic debris found in samples of seawater from Cork harbour. The images mimic John Vaughan Thompson's early scientific discoveries of plankton, also taken from samples in Cork.

Current scientific research has found that plankton ingest plastic micro-particles, mistaking them for food and, being at the bottom of the food chain, they are themselves a crucial source of food for larger creatures.