



Mercia Marina is a great place to live, in part, because many people in their different ways care about creating a happy, safe and beautiful environment for us all to enjoy. There are lots of opportunities to contribute to our community as volunteers both formally and informally. The more organised opportunities can be divided in three categories: Our Environment, Keeping us Safe and Social Activities.

Our Environment

This covers everything from being part of the team working with the Met Office and the marina weather station to helping encourage the wide variety of wildlife that share our space by providing Bee Boxes, creating new bird or butterfly-friendly habitats or through to litter picking around the site.

Keeping Us Safe

This includes our First Aiders and Fire Wardens with both teams providing training and continuous support. There are other people happy to help on a less formal basis by provide lifts for medical appointments and the odd lift for shopping or visiting friends in hospital.

Social Activities

Social activities are a vital part of our community and coordinated through the MAC (Mercia Activities Committee). Clubs run weekly or monthly, usually from October to April and are organised by club leaders. There's the Book Club, Craft, Music, Ukulele and Art Groups. There's Bingo and Quizzes, a Christmas Fuddle and a variety of one-off events throughout the year.

Reading the Mercia Mercury and The Nature Society newsletters is also a great source of information and both are produced by volunteers.

Away from the Marina

If you are interested in volunteering away from the Marina, there is a wealth of information on line at www.doit.org.uk a national database of all the registered volunteering opportunities. It's searchable by area and interests and is a good place to start. Or we have a local Volunteer Centre (tel. 01283 21976) based in Swadlincote. The National Trust loves welcoming new volunteers Check out Calke Abbey, Sudbury Hall or Shugborough. Locally there are Befriending Schemes for people who are isolated and lonely, home visiting or group meetings. There are transport schemes that need volunteer drivers.

Volunteering on the waterways

The Canal and River Trust needs volunteer lock keepers and more members of the Towpath Task Forces. Volunteer are needed at the local hospitals or you could help in an animal shelter, or dog walk for people who love their pets but are finding it difficult to exercise them.

The rewards

The list is endless and the rewards are great. Volunteering is a lovely way to get to know people better, make new friends and learn new skills. You can still go on holiday, go cruising for weeks, vary your volunteering day in the week perhaps and so on. If you have a bit of time then giving that time back to your community by helping others is just about the most valuable and significant thing you could possible do.



Easter Fun In The Sun
Ian Carroll

Mercia Marina has added to its many attributes and become one of the loveliest Open Air (and Free) Gyms in the country! Where else could you walk with ease, close to home, meeting friends along the way, have a constantly changing landscape and know that each circuit is boosting your health.

Growing tribe

Little wonder, then, that there is a growing tribe of 'health and fitness' walkers adding to the number who have always walked and the many dog walkers. And the way it's developed here is an interesting variation on a Walking for Health Group (who also come to the Marina regularly); our walkers tend to travel individually or in pairs, they go at the pace that suits them, they have their own timetable and may walk more than once a day. Yet they are on familiar territory, very much part of a community as they greet friends along the way and they develop their own challenges and goals as they go. All have started from square one, taking it a circuit at a time, because they felt they wanted to do something about their fitness. The individual profiles tell their own stories and are as diverse as the individuals themselves.



Jane Wakeham: I've been walking since January as a deliberate move to get active. I started with a knee brace (because of two knee replacements)

though after a few days I tried without to no ill-effects. Finding one circuit a day manageable, I added a second in the afternoon! Then I just felt like carrying on after a single circuit so I'm now up to two in the morning and two in the afternoon. With a bit of diet control as well, I'm delighted at my progress. I've lost lots of weight, feel much stronger, my confidence has grown and love seeing my fellow walkers – a community within a community – especially when Neil rescued me after a stumble!



Irene Lea: I started my early morning walking to combine exercise and diet at the end of February and do two laps round the marina every day. I start at about 6.30 am and

takes me about 40 mins. It certainly wakes me up and is a good way of starting the day and to be at one with our resident wildlife. Listening to the early birdsong is a joy. I'm finding it a real benefit and hope to up my game and do more walking.



Walking Works

Walking works

What they all have in common is a recognition that Walking Works! Quoting the recent Walking for Health Report, "Walking in the nearest activity to the perfect exercise" because

- It keeps you active
- It helps you stay a healthy weight
- It increases 'good' cholesterol
- It reduces blood pressure
- It builds healthy muscles and bones
- It improves balance and so reduces the risk of falls

There are 9.1 million adults in England who walk recreationally for at least 30 minutes once a month. This is almost twice the number that swim, more than twice the number that go to a gym, and nearly three times the number that cycle. The Marina walkers are therefore in very good company!

Circuit options

The Marina has the two main options for circuits – the perimeter road which is (give or take) a mile and 2,000 steps or taking in the loop round the dog field, past Dreki the dragon and up to the top of the Park through the trees and down to the perimeter road again. That is roughly 2km and 2,400 steps. More distance can be added- up and round the Boardwalk, along the Foraging Trail on top of the bund at the north end of the



Neil Potter: My walking began last Autumn; I had an 'Enough Of All This' epiphany – the pills, the post heart-attack anxiousness, high blood pressure and other

health niggles. My armed forces background meant yomping was second nature, so that's what I settled on. I used the Marina perimeter road to start to give Mary peace of mind in terms of safety and being close at hand! I always walk in the same direction and listen to 70s heavy metal or fast beat-driven music as a pace setter and a distraction. I go off-piste now to do my daily standard of 10,000 steps (2 trips to the Willington Co-Op and a couple of perimeter circuits) and on 20-mile days I may take in Repton or Burton along with the perimeter circuits. So my blisters do occasionally have blisters! The effect has been great; my health has improved dramatically and my pill intake has dropped to virtually zero. I now need to increase the aerobic intensity; I walk at 4.5mph and can't up that without running (I'm hopeless) and I don't fancy the professional walkers' bum wiggle! So it'll probably be the walking poles which will get my arms working.

Marina. Perhaps go off piste (as Neil Potter and Tony Haslam do) and throw in a walk to Willington, Repton or Burton. The Findern Footpaths Group have their own map of walks and you'll know there is a local area walking map on the public side available from the Office. You might also choose to take things gently and treat it as a Wildlife Walk or try Shinrin-yoku (look it up!) either here as the trees grow or the other side of the canal.

Joining in

With the long evenings increasingly with us and the promise of good weather over



Angela Carroll: I started walking last year, very often with Irene Lea, to keep fit and I do three or four laps a day. I do walk several miles with the horses every day, going round

their two acre field but I wanted to add in a bit of 'measured' exercise. Like most of us, I'll go in all weathers – after all, Ian and I are used to the outdoors and have wild camped in all weather – snow, rain and ice – so a bit of chill and drizzle at the Marina isn't going to stop me! I do enjoy seeing the wildlife as I walk – the geese with their goslings, the coot and their young and the heron. I've not yet spotted our Muntjac deer yet but I know it's here somewhere!

the next few months, maybe we'll see more people joining in. And, if you're off out boating, don't stop walking! It's a common boaty practice (as most of you will know) for the lockwheeler to walk between locks as a deliberate bit of exercise. But take care on the towpath; not all are walker-friendly!



Fran Hurley and Maria Shaw:

Maria and Fran fell into walking together earlier this year, both of them seeing it

as a way of improving physical and mental health and offering an alternative to swimming at Repton which they'd been doing through the winter. Maria had been doing well with her walking when, last year, she broke her leg which set her back several months. Now she and Fran enjoy both their 'together' and their separate walks. They both enjoy the Marina and seeing the developing estate but they're also often to be found heading for Willington, Repton, Burton or the Nadee. Maria's 10,000 steps five days a week had her heading for ASDA recently whereas Fran finds it easier to use the Marina circuit for the main part, reckoning on something around the six circuits a day making the number of circuits or the time for each her own challenge. They both listen to music as they walk and they both reckon they're probably fair weather walkers – so they're hitting the right time of year right now!



Trudy Fowler started walking a couple of years ago but had to stop with a back injury. She started again recently for various reasons – needing to

increase her bone density, wanting to feel fit and boost her energy levels and, finally, make sure her Mother of the Bride Outfit looks great (which it will)! She likes power walking and reckons on doing somewhere between 16 and 18 miles a week, turning right out of the Marina to Willington or left up to the Garden Centre beyond Findern. She manages a slightly dodgy hip, knowing when to stop and take a day out. When work and other commitments allow, her sister-in-law Wendy joins her and they stride out swiftly, commenting on the changes in the Marina over the weeks and greeting the various people they pass. Trudy – unlike some others – favours the stony paths, reckoning they are softer to walk on and kinder to her knees. Her goal is to stay as she is, increasing her fitness level and keeping her body moving.



Tony Haslam, as many people will remember, recently walked the length of the T&M for charity. He is still walking; 40 or so miles a week and he is leading walks for the Foot-loose Group. Round trips of 3

or 4 miles from Alrewas and at Calke Abbey are immediately on the agenda and he's planning another walk starting at the Willow Tree, going to Findern and back for lunch.

If you want to know more about his walks, get in touch with the Office or me. His own walking is around the Marina, to Repton or, a couple of favourites, down to Wetherspoons in Burton for breakfast and then back and the five-mile walk to Swarkestone Garden Centre for a cup of coffee! And he enjoys it; it's become a real habit but he can't run and is determined to keep fit so walking works.

Lack of space means that there are as many regular walkers that haven't been profiled as those who have. So - and my apologies for those I've still missed - a shout out to Nigel and Jane Hunt, Sue Hicks, Bruce and Sheila Napier, Wendy Fowler, Pete and Sue Horridge, Steve and Jane Pigott, Tracy Richards, Bill and Jo Smith, Ray Fowler, Wynne and our very special 92-year old champion walker Mary Bodman.



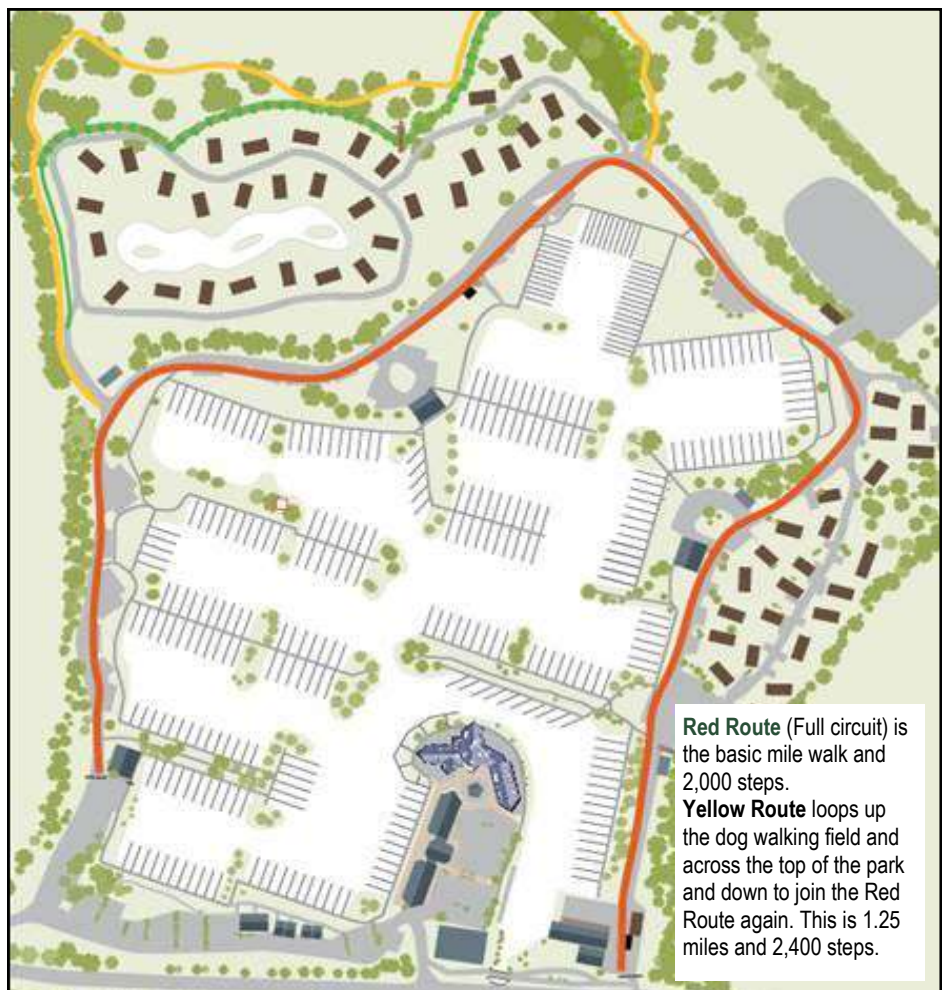
Our thanks to
Midland Chenders
for their support with this
newsletter



Yvonne Walker started off her walking in January this year as a way of speeding up her progress at *Slimming World*. Buying a FitBit at the start of January, she's been

walking like a mad thing (her words!) ever since. She regularly does 15,000 steps a day but on Bank Holiday after a bit of an Anniversary celebration with Ray and a Boaters' Breakfast at the Willows she walked for the rest of the day and clocked up 36,000! She didn't do it alone – she tag-teamed Sue Hicks, Ray, Tracy Richards in turn and just kept going.

What began as something to be done has become a real part of her life. When she gets back from work, a quick circuit is restorative; if she's working from the boat, the lunch break always includes a quick lap. Her fitness is part of her and Ray's long-term retirement plan of extended cruising on the canals. For that, she knew she needed to be fit. She is delighted at the difference it has made to her life and reckons the environment she walks in – the birds, the water, the estate – and the people she meets are a major factor.



Red Route (Full circuit) is the basic mile walk and 2,000 steps.

Yellow Route loops up the dog walking field and across the top of the park and down to join the Red Route again. This is 1.25 miles and 2,400 steps.



Sculpture Over Water by Paul Walker

Mercia Photography April Winners

With the onset of spring and nature bursting in all directions around the marina, it is not surprising that many of the photographs entered in this month's competition reflect the season. All winners receive either a bottle of Prosecco or a box of chocolates from the Marina Office.

If you have a photograph of the Marina you think is worthy of entry then let the office have a copy and you might see it on the back page of the *Mercury* next month.

To enter the monthly competition, send your 'Mercia Marina' photographs to tony@merciamarina.co.uk



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How are my donations spent?

We are very fortunate to have strong relationships with the UK publishing industry so all of our books are donated. Donations from Reverse Book Club Members help us cover the costs of sourcing, storing, selecting and shipping the books to over 20 countries around the world".

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Flowers by Louise Holmes



Duck by Bill Smith