



birthday or anniversary or just become a regular Friday night purchase as is the custom in so many countries.

There are indoor and outdoor plants for all budgets and spaces, with all sorts of plant accessories for the home including the elegant and classic copper Haws indoor watering can. There are wicker baskets, wooden or woven nesting boxes and bird feeders with a designer twist! It really is a place to go and explore.



Alina and Dale met in Prague three years ago when he was working with the wholesale side of flowers and they got married last year, moving to the UK full-time shortly afterwards. Dale and his brother Carl opened Hudsons Plant Centre in Duffield (formerly Ecclesbourne Plant Centre) in November 2018 and The Horticulture is Dale and Alina's new business which they have been planning for over the months as they waited for the right place to become available. Unit 4 on the Piazza was ideal, they said, with the mix of surrounding businesses, the environment and the general ambience. They have been welcomed by all the other businesses at the Marina and with their experience, style, flair and passion they are quickly establishing themselves as firm favourites for both visitors and the Marina's residential community. We are delighted to welcome them.

## Introducing ◆ THE HORTICULTURE ◆

**A**lina and Dale Hudson have a vision for the new addition to The Piazza. Their chosen name "The Horticulture" above the doorway offers an entrance into a world where agriculture, architecture and role of plants in our lives are equally important. Alina's background in interior design has created a space full of texture and shape. The materials have a natural emphasis,

the containers are aesthetically pleasing and her products are functional and gorgeous! She wants her plants to be 'useful' - plants that fit in with busy lives yet have a charm and elegance to them. There is a wonderful array of ferns, cacti and air plants (Tillandsia), orchids sold with their own little bags of compost and 'grab and go' bouquets ready to brighten up a dark winter evening, celebrate a





## The Community Hall It's up to you

The Marina understands that there continues to be interest in a commu-

nity hall and, to that end, have resubmitted a planning application.

A questionnaire is being put together and will be circulated to all members of the Mercia community both online and hard copy. It will ask for your individual

opinions on how you think such a facility might be used (social, meetings, activities, club sessions, events, etc.), what you believe would be of particular value, what use you would make of it and how you think it might be funded.



### Tony Haslam's 2020 Trent & Mersey Walk for Prostate Cancer

Tony says:  
"This year, there will be three of us walking the 92 miles of the Trent and Mersey Canal - two Derby County fans and one Florist. I tried to get one other a

friend of mine who is a Reading supporter he seemed very interested till I mentioned the ninety-two miles, then his second word was "off. So it will be Dave who was me last year, new boy Phil and me bringing up the rear. The walk will be from 8-14 June. More news to follow through Facebook



(This is because there are those who really don't like matches and the competition but do like the trip out and the banter.)

3 Do you have ideas for other venues for fishing trips?

The only currently confirmed match will be Neil's match in July .

Please have a think and come to the AGM ready to discuss the above.



### The Great Pumpkin Challenge

It's about time to start thinking and planning for growing your pumpkins for this Autumn's competition. Full details will be published in next month's *Mercia Mercury* and, if you get off to a prompt start you will have a good five months to prepare your perfect pumpkin for the judging at the end of October. Mercia Marina is sponsoring the competition so you will be able to sign up in the Office and collect your (free) starter kit of three pumpkin seeds, a seedling pot, compost (peat-free) and a sheet of tips on growing your pumpkin. And there will be Pumpkin Carving and Pumpkin Pie competitions as well. Judging will be divided into classes depending on where the pumpkin has been grown (boat, lodge or allotment) and won't be JUST about weight.



### The Piscatorial Society AGM

The AGM will be on Saturday, 24 March in The Willow Tree Tea Rooms starting at 7pm. John Welch and Nigel Hunt would be

glad of your thoughts on a couple of key issues:

- 1 Do you want to keep the matches on a monthly basis?
- 2 Would you prefer organised fishing trips rather than matches?



### Mercia Model Boat Group

Mick Stecko, Stuart Willington and Rob Williams have set up this 'Remote Control' group which had its first meeting in January.

Everyone is welcome to attend the meetings. The March meetings will be on Friday 6th March and Friday 27th March, each at 7.00 p.m. in the Willow Tree Tea Rooms.

Further monthly meeting dates will be notified both on Facebook and in the Newsletter.



Our thanks to  
Midland Chandlers  
for their support with  
this newsletter

# 50 Years On The Cut

Part II  
By Roger Carter

The first year was spent debugging *Basil*. Piper finished the build in a hell of a hurry and it showed, but they paid numerous free visits to sort problems. Meanwhile, I was getting used to being a boat owner. It was way more stressful than I imagined. I lay awake at nights worrying about every little glitch. No longer could I rely on obliging hire companies to rush out and fix things. I joined RCR and I mostly sleep better these days, though there's always something to fix on a boat. I used to think 'marine' meant quality but now I know it means 'expensive'. Barb took to the water like the proverbial duck. She loves doing the locks and meeting all the other weirdos of the waterways.

In 2008 we set off, with family aboard, down the Oxford canal to the Thames, which was in flood. We holed up in Oxford for two days until it subsided. As we exited the Sheepwash channel, the current grabbed us and *Basil* hurtled downstream broadside, belching black smoke as I tried to head up. I later learned that Duke's Cut is a lot easier. I was hoping to make the head of navigation at Lechlade but we only got as far as Northmoor lock where I was presented with a strong stream warning card (see Feb issue) by the lockkeeper. I turned around and we raced downstream towards London. I had an incident in Bray lock where I crashed into a plastic cruiser, causing our cratch to collapse on top of Barb who suffered scrapes and bruises. Fortunately,

the cruiser had a rubber boat tied to the stern which acted as a giant fender, saving the cruiser from harm and me from an insurance claim. The rest of the Thames was peaceful and enjoyable. We saw the famous Swan Upping at Abingdon. That evening we found the Swan Markers, minus the swans, in the pub quaffing ale and singing rude songs about Chelsea Pensioners. We were even able to moor near Windsor Castle and at Hampton Court. We ventured up the River Wey and at Guildford we had to call the police when we were attacked overnight by a gang of yobs throwing bottles. The police never showed up and we only had superficial damage. The trip down the tideway through London was exciting. I had prepared by taking a radio course in Marlow, getting my license and buying a cheapo marine radio in the US. We left Teddington in the wee hours to catch the tide. Robert Neff used to work at Limehouse and he gave me invaluable advice on how to get into the lock. I radioed ahead and the lock was ready for us. The ebb tide runs fast at the lock

approach so I did a U-turn in the river and beat back up against the tide before powering into the lock. I was sure the tide was going to bang us into the retaining wall but the backwash saved us and we glided in. I was beaming. We fell into the Grapes for a well-earned pint or three.

From here it was a long slog up the Grand Union, the Coventry and the T&M to await opening day at Mercia. I'm out of space now, so the yarns of the next ten years will have to wait for future episodes, if I'm allowed, or you can read the full account on my journal at <http://www.public.asu.edu/~icrjc/Narrowboat/narrowboat.htm>

I'm in my seventies now, Barbara has gone right off boating and I have arthritis in both ankles and a knee. I manage to single-hand OK on short trips and I still love the greenery, the scenery, the ancient infrastructure and the wildlife. Each year may be my last but somehow, I just can't bear to give it all up. In my head I'm still 20 years old, wandering the Regent's canal but, in reality, I'm an old man steering a lonely boat to Zion.



## M.A.C. CALENDAR FOR MARCH

All events are held in the Willow Tree Tea Rooms and generally start at 7pm.

### Watercolour Group

Monday 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30 March

### Craft Group

Wednesday 4 & Tuesday 10, 17 & 24 March

### Ukulele Group

Thursday 5, 12, 19 & 26 March

### Remote Control Group

Friday 6 & 27 March

### Book Club

Tuesday 31 March

### Music Group

Tuesday 3 March

### Newcomers Evening

Saturday 7 March

### Games Night

Friday 16 March

### Boat Handling & Maintenance

Saturday 14 March

### Piscatorial Society AGM

Saturday 21 March

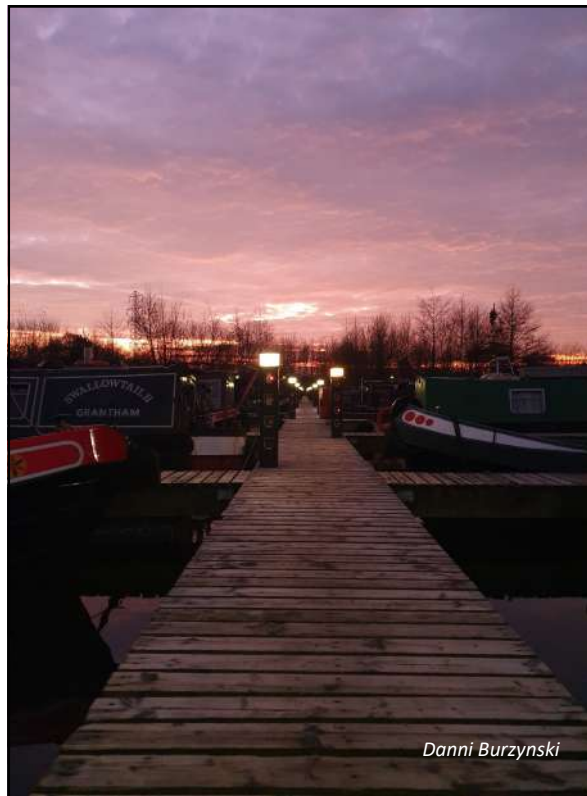
### Quiz Night

Wednesday 25 March





Emma Phillips



Danni Burzynski



Andy Basford

### January Photography Winners

January's winners were Emma Philips, Andy Basford and Danni Burzynski and receive either a bottle of Prosecco or box of chocolates from the Marina Office.

If you take a photograph you think it merits inclusion in the *Mercury* submit your February entries to: [tony@merciamarina.co.uk](mailto:tony@merciamarina.co.uk)

### Newcomers' Evening



Saturday 7 March

If you are new to marina life, here at Mercia, and would like to know what is going on socially, and how you can get involved, make sure you put the

7 March in your diary and make a point of popping along to The Willow Tree from 7pm

### A Big 'Thank You' from the Grounds' and Maintenance Teams

The Grounds' and Maintenance Teams would like to say a big thank you for the gifts made to their 'Christmas Box'. As much as anything, it's great to know people appreciate them and want to express their thanks in a tangible way.

### And finally....

A HUGE Golden Windlass to the whole Mercia Community is certainly also due for all the care and attention shown by so many of the community during the recent stormy weather. Boats and Lodges of those who were away were checked, people were checked, messages were run, shopping picked up and litter and debris cleared. Everyone felt safe and cared for.

For comment and contributions, please contact Jo on 07973 711431 or at [jojames46@gmail.com](mailto:jojames46@gmail.com)



## Recent Golden Windlasses have been awarded to:

**Kev Holmes** who has helped many people on the surrounding jetties with shopping trips, little jobs, trips to the doctor or hospital, etc. when they have been incapacitated

**Ian Carroll** for frequently responding out of working hours

**Grounds' and Maintenance Team** for their tireless work over the winter. It was commented on how they kept working in all conditions whilst remaining courteous and friendly.

**Dave Holmes** for lights along F,G,H, and his willingness to help anyone with anything.

**Maxine Reid** for always being on hand when others need help, such as helping partners when one is in the hospital, attending in emergencies and helping people stay independent following operations.

**Neil Potter** for his tireless site-wide and off-site litter picking.

*If you know somebody in the community who has gone above and beyond the norm let the Marina Office know.*