



# Mercia MERCURY

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Emma Paxton's poster speaks to the heart of our Community. If you work your way round her poster, I would guess most of us are doing most of these things. For 'Camp Out', we are doing the very near equivalent all the time; so a full dose of the outdoors, sunshine and the glory of Spring. And we have been keeping our contact with each other going.

**The Book Club** created a WhatsApp group a year ago and our first Zoom meeting was held at the end of March. If you'd like to join in, get in touch with Jo Smith.

**The Craft Group** are keeping themselves busy with individual projects and they had an open to all 'Knit and Knatter' Zoom evening 10 days ago. If you'd like to join in, get in touch with Jane Hunt.

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**The First Aid Team** continue their support – with appropriate precautions to keep everyone safe – and have a Messenger group which keeps them in touch with each other at all times.

**The Mercia Musicians** are to be heard in different ways: Mick and other ukulele players can be seen and heard, Kevin Goodall and his saxophone serenading people's birthdays and the Lodge Trio playing on Thursday nights after the Clap for Carers.

**The Art Group** may not have met together but they have been busy sharing their work on Facebook. Their erstwhile tutor, Dave Tattersall, is always there for them and delighted to see the progress being made.

**The Marina Zoom Coffee Mornings** are now regular events – both Saturday morning at 11am and Wednesday afternoon at 2pm. Everyone is welcome and if you'd like to join in but don't know how to Zoom, ask Pete Horridge (pete\_horridge@icloud.com).

**The Floaty Boaty Bowling Boyz** are also taking to Zoom to keep in touch with each other, trying their hand at virtual bowls and parlez with co-founder Roger Filler in New Zealand.

Informally a lot is happening. People shop for each other, run errands, collect prescriptions and co-ordinate food deliveries. Unoccupied boats and lodges are watched over and kept safe. The Community Facebook has information and is a good way to ask for help or advice.

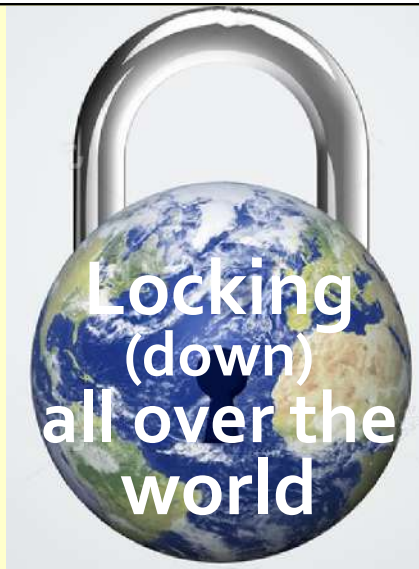


**Roger & Barbara Carter**  
**Arizona, USA**

In many ways, life here in Arizona is similar to the UK. We have been in lockdown for three weeks. Restrictions are not quite as severe here – we are allowed out to the stores or to exercise if we follow distancing guidelines and wear masks and gloves. Short car trips are OK. So far, we have not seen the impressive mobilization of volunteers that you have. Deliveries are scarce. The weather here is gorgeous right now but will be hell in summer when temperatures reach 45° or higher. The Federal response has been abysmal. I never thought I'd wish Boris was President! We are keeping in better touch with loved ones via Skype, WhatsApp, etc., than we did before the pandemic. Doctor visits and club meetings are all conducted online. A distant 47-year-old relative in Seattle survived COVID but said "It was horrible, terrible pain, and I can't believe how it ravaged my body". The worst part is the homesickness. Right now, I would normally be looking forward to boating. I saw photos on the CRT site of a superb mooring at Wicken Fen which moved me to tears. I thought "I may never get to visit that, ever".

**Pat & Roger Filler**  
**Wellington, New Zealand**

Kiwis are not generally known to welcome government interference, so NZ Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's announcement she was going to "go hard, and go early" at the end of March and shut down NZ a good week before most other countries, there was some doubt in the media whether the country as a whole would support the inconvenience. Our restrictions have turned out to be some of the most draconian around the world. We can only wander up to 2kms from home and if you take to your car, expect to be stopped by the police, who are keeping a very visible presence. But worse for most Kiwis is....there is no rugby!



In retrospect, the decision has proved to have been right. New Zealand may only have a population of five million, but (to date) there have only been around 1,400 confirmed cases, mercifully less than 20 deaths and we are now seeing more recoveries than confirmed new cases. For us it's been pretty much business as usual. We live on the lower ground floor of a large house we share with our daughter's family in a leafy suburb of Wellington. It's normally a busy place, but now there are family cricket matches in the streets and children kicking balls. Just like the 1950s and 60s in fact. We also see more of our grandchildren than ever and a routine has quickly emerged.



Supermarket queues remain long and the wait can be between 20 minutes and an hour. As a net exporter of 70% of the food Kiwis eat, there should be no shortages, and the shelves full. We have no idea when we will be allowed to return, though our visas have been extended until September. We have just heard that our flights back, via Canada and the US in early June have been cancelled so who knows. We think we are in for the wet and windy Wellington winter. Stay safe and well. Roger & Pat



**Tony & Angela Blackburn**  
**Tenerife**

Our return to Tenerife in late February, to complete a house refurbishment is now on hold because materials cannot be purchased, the half painted rooms have to stay that way and the final fix in the kitchen can't be done.

In Tenerife the lockdown regulations are very strict - most locals are complying and the tourist areas are abandoned. The order is simple - stay at your home except for essential food shopping and medicines plus fueling your vehicle and going to essential work. In more remote areas, like villages higher on the mountains with limited exit roads, these are blocked by police controlling entry and exit.

We are quite isolated, although village shopping is only around 6 minutes' walk away; staying here sounded so much safer than travelling on a full aircraft back to UK.

Our Close Encounter of the Worst Kind was four days ahead of the Spanish lockdown. A long-time friend called to show his new, to him, Jag. He complained feeling unwell and 8 days later he was admitted to hospital with the virus. He is now at home recovering, thank goodness.

The weekend prior to the lockdown, the local supermarket shelves were fairly stripped of popular items but by Wednesday the shelves were back to near normal and have remained well stocked over recent weeks. Local Police came to our home a few days ago asking if any help was required from town hall.

Thank you to those on the marina who have assisted by moving and checking our boat and doing other necessary small maintenance jobs. Stay safe, stay isolated and hope to see you all at some point!

**Roy Stark**  
**Hong Kong**

I've been a member of the Mercia Marina community for over 2 years now but spend 9 months of the year in Hong Kong. I should have come over in March





but my flight was cancelled. Hong Kong was the first country to be directly affected by the virus but perhaps the 2003 SARS experience made us better prepared.

We've had our share of the 'idiocy virus', panic buying, empty shelves and the hoarding of toilet rolls which I believe started here. There was even an armed robbery of a supermarket for its supply! However people soon came to their senses and the virus seems to be under control so we are not yet under a full lockdown.

Hong Kong has concentrated on testing, contact tracing, quarantine facilities and flexible working arrangements together with social distancing. Gatherings are limited to 4 people, restaurants enforce 2 metre between tables and entertainment venues are closed. But most shops are open and people are free to go out. A mask is recommended and 90% of people conform. With a population of 7.5m, we have only had 1,000 confirmed cases and 4 deaths and the hospitals seem to be coping.

This of course could change quickly as there is talk of a 2nd wave once the borders open. And, sadly, the good weather over Easter resulted in the mass migration to the beaches and parks. We may see an impact of this in 14 days' time.

For me the lockdown has not had much of an effect. I live in a small Chinese village on Lantau Island; I can walk in the countryside and there are no short-ages. I'm embarrassed to say I'm glad my flight was cancelled as I was saddened and surprised to see how quickly the UK has been ravaged by this pandemic and my heart goes out to you all.

#### **Malc & Sheena Gatenby Adelaide, Australia**

We arrived in Australia late February, spent 7 days in Brisbane then 10 days in Sydney. On 17th March we drove from

Sydney to Melbourne along the Great Ocean Road – the 800km of coastal roads lined with the burned out trees from recent fires. Though things started to change dramatically around the world, Australia was still open. A week later our Emirates' flight had been cancelled, Dubai had shut and Australia had announced its work from home/social distancing measures. Luckily we found a great apartment to rent at a bargain price since there is nobody in town renting now.

By mid-April it was the same situation; you could only go out for food, exercise (walking and running which I did most days) and no more than two persons together at any one time and the beaches closed. Food shops are fully stocked (and off licences with cheap good Oz/NZ wine) and we had a restaurant in our building. Shops haven't accepted cash for weeks and I can see this being the norm going forward. Our



apartment had great wifi and netflix so we watched box set after box set and used Zoom and WhatsApp to stay in touch with family and friends around the world.

With Emirates not planning flights from Australia until mid June and our visas expiring on 21st May we took the first available flight with Qatar Airways to London Heathrow via Qatar on Monday 20th April, getting back to Mercia Marina the next day. We had had enough of 'guessing' flights and figuring out how to get home and it seemed best to take a flight while we could.

While I wrote all the above while we were still in Adelaide, by the time you read this I should be doing my early morning runs around the Marina and we'll be settling down after a very strange few weeks. Stay safe everyone.

#### **Andy Winebloom & Lisa Knight Brussels, Belgium**



I arrived in Belgium at the end of February to start a 2-year assignment working at Toyota's Head Office in Brussels, Belgium. The plan was to rent an apartment and live out here, with my partner Lisa coming out most weekends, or me coming back to the marina maybe once or twice a month to visit family and friends. We have a camper van and our intention was to bring it over and explore not only Belgium, but France, Germany and beyond. However, within a couple of weeks of arriving everything changed. Lockdown happened around a week and a half before it came to the UK. Mid-March, we made a quick decision for Lisa to grab a case of clothes and her work laptop and come out here. Here the rules were strict from the start, enforced by a strong police presence eager to fine anyone not respecting them. Only food shops, pharmacies and banks were open through to the end of April. The hospitals are just about coping as the 'flattening of the curve' of people requiring treatment. Talk is over the next month of life very slowly returning to normality.

But life is still going on. Every evening people go out onto their balconies or front doorsteps to applaud the Health Care and essential workers; we take our daily exercise; we are using free time to improve our cooking skills, French language, and Belgian Beer and French Wine appreciation. We keep in touch with family and friends through video links, taking part in online quizzes and games to add to the fun and laughter. And we are both still very busy with work, so no time for much else !!

Wishing all of our friends at Mercia good health, and hope to catch up with you soon – preferably in person rather than virtually.

**W**e said a heartfelt and sad farewell to **Pete Hicks** at the beginning of April. A much-loved

family man who was woven into the fabric of the Marina, he leaves us with wonderful memories, joy and our thanks to all he gave to us. A boater's salute on the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup> of April kept him company at the time of his unattended cremation and it was a fitting and emotional tribute to our friend.

Sue wrote a wonderful open letter to Pete which began

"To my darling Pete

This was not the way it should have been, knowing that you are leaving us on your final journey, to be cremated unattended, seems unreal and unfair. My heart literally breaks, and after 35 years of marriage, knowing you since I was five, a life time of



amazing experiences, world travels, the ups and downs that are sent to us all, we survived - it was an incredible colourful and exciting life, so I thank you for everything."

Sue also wants to give a 'massive' thank you to so many many members of the marina community for all their help, support, love and care to Pete and to her.

When the coronavirus measures are eased, there will be a Memorial Service for Pete in Willington Church. And it was his wish that, rather than any flowers, gifts could be made to our local Air Ambulance.



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**A** very big thank you to all those who are keeping the Marina running and putting themselves out there for our benefit – the Office, the Grounds' Staff, Housekeeping, Chrissy and Grahame, Heg and Richard, the First Aid Team.

And can we remember to thank our Posties, Bin Men, all Delivery Men and those who come to fill up or empty tanks, Delivery Company people (a quick thank you wave if they're passing you is a nice way of doing it).

Thank you to those here who go off to take their place as key workers; it will be tough to keep going, so remember our Thursday clap and horn blow is very much for you!

Thank you to those within the Community who are doing shopping or pharmacy runs, checking on neighbours,

making sure no-one's lacking a cheery greeting or a bit of a distanced chat. This is a time to look around and think of what can we do for each other.

And, finally, a wave to all those members of our Community who aren't – or can't be – here at the moment – boaters, the shop owners and staff, regular visitors, family and friends. We haven't forgotten any of you. Keep safe and keep well until we meet again.



**REMINDER:** The Office is open every day from

10am to 4.30pm. But please go as infrequently as is possible to protect both you and whomever is in the Office. And don't hang around; "Swift and Seldom" is the Office visit motto!

**Our thanks to Midland Chandlers for their support with this newsletter**



**O**n Saturday 11 April, the Craft Group were asked to help our NHS fundraising project by making

Care Bags, into which could be put small items for the nurses and medics at Derby and Burton hospitals who are having to cope with the long hours of wearing close-fitting face masks and other PPE. The call was posted on our community FB page and a group of crafters immediately stepped forward. They all worked flat out for three days and made an amazing 163 bags and 157 headbands. We had a Imessenger group where we could exchange jokes, ideas, post pictures of cake and our men getting involved! A massive thank you to Still Waters who donated face wipes and pamper bags and have supported the fundraiser in other ways; BUPA Dental Health in Burton who have given toothpaste, water bottles, mints, mirrors and other items following a phone call from a moorer's daughter; Anna from Elegant Touch has contributed pamper items. And thanks to all those who have gifted money so that we can order more things to put in the bags. We continue to raise funds and if you still want to donate just ask me or John Welch . Louise Davies