

New Arrivals at Mercia

We welcomed **Ian Douglass** to Mercia Marina at the beginning of October as Head of Grounds and Maintenance. He brings with him a wealth of expertise (having studied at Pershore Horticultural College) plus his subsequent and extensive experience which includes running a retail Garden Centre, Contracts Supervisor for Glendale and Grounds and Maintenance Manager for Warner Hotels – most recently looking after Studley Castle. Coming from Tip-ton in the Black Country and brought up surrounded by canals and tunnels, he only knew about boats and the waterways from visiting canal-side pubs and walking the towpaths! This is therefore a brand new environment and culture for him and one he's looking forward to very much. He sees the huge potential here for the community and visitors and is intrigued by the 'cut-off' feel to the Marina with its distinct and differing habitats which have developed over the last decade. He sees his role as very much hands-on – creating an annual plan which, though dictated by the seasons, will have a flexi-



Ian 'Doug' Douglass



Charlotte Manning

ity which can adapt to changes in the weather and get ahead of maintenance so that it becomes 'preventative'. There are projects to take forward on both the 'public' and marina side which will support the wildlife and offer interest and recreation for both the community and visitors. With much of the planting put in twelve years ago, there's a need for updating and renewing, checking for tree health, ensuring safety and seeking to make everything the best it can be. He'll get to know all of us over time, so introduce yourself and add to the Mercia welcome.

Charlotte Manning is another addition to the 'Estate' team, with an apprentice-

ship placement from Broomfield College where she is doing Level 3 Horticulture. She will be working here four days a week for the next two years, adding practical experience to her College studies. She also has Level 3 in Countryside Management so will be working with the Marina, with the emphasis on wildlife projects and developing walks and exercise areas.

Although now living locally in Sudbury and knowing Burton well, she hadn't visited Mercia but sees it as a beautiful and amazing place to start her career. She loves the outdoors, her bike, running and walking but with no one in the family involved in horticulture or the land, she tried a number of different avenues including being a barber and hairdresser and working a ski season. Now she feels she's exactly where she wants to be and is already thoroughly enjoying her time with us. So, as with Ian Douglass, introduce yourself and welcome her to our community.

We also welcome **Andrew Gowlett** to the Grounds and Maintenance Team and **Geness Cornbill** and **Cheryl Scott** to the Housekeeping Team.

Towpath resurfacing

CRT will be resurfacing the towpath from Potlocks (Bridge 22) to the Nadee (Bridge 21) with a target start date in the first half of November. This is part of a larger resurfacing project – Fradley to Alrewas, Willington and Shardlow. The Fradley to Alrewas section started on 14 September and depending on the number of gangs the contractor uses, the work is expected to continue to mid



November. Then it will be 'Willington's' turn (see inset map) and the Shardlow section may be done in parallel. Originally it was all due to start in the early part of the year but Covid-19 restrictions and furloughed staff prevented them starting new projects on site.

So if you are heading out on your boat and turning right or left over the coming weeks you will know what to expect! It is hoped Potlocks Bridge will still be accessible

from Willington. The surfacing will be using a product called "Centrack" which is a naturally occurring limestone material and the intention is for the path to be 1.5m wide. Let's hope everyone is aware of the CRT Towpath Code:

"In general, priority should be given to the slowest and those using the waterway".





Roger Filler writes:

The five cooling towers on the now defunct Willington Power Station site are very much like a jar of Marmite. You either love them or hate them. But either way there is no denying their imposing presence on the landscape in this part of the Trent Valley. Collectively, they are known as 'The Five Sisters' and I had never heard them called that before, but the name crops up in a number of reports and stories chronicling the history of the Power Station that shut down in the late 1990's, so perhaps we should start calling them that. The name relates to their curves.

Construction

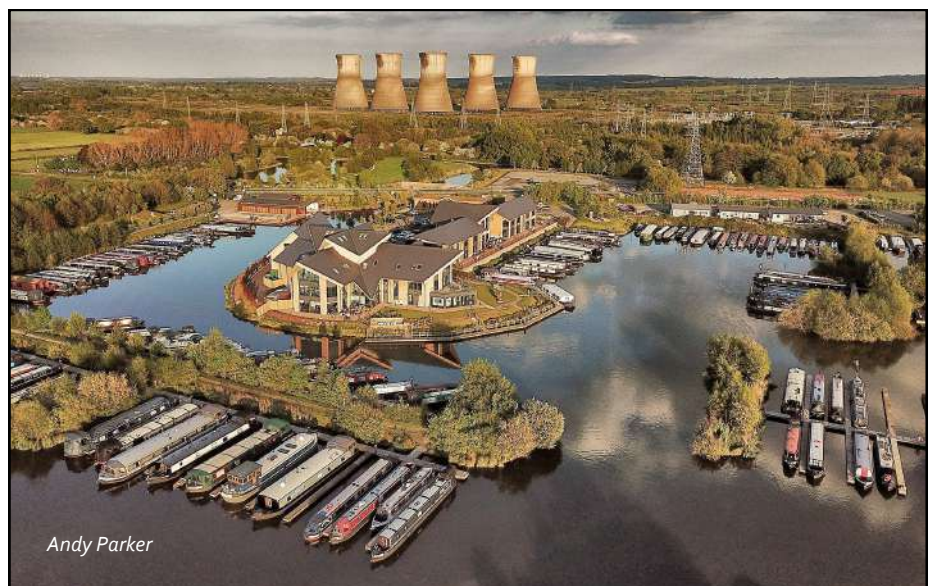
Constructed in the 1950s and each weighing in at a massive 6,500 tons, their purpose was to take the huge amounts of Trent water used in the coal-fired power station and slowly cool it. The water was then transferred to large ponds, some still visible on the site, before it was deemed safe to slowly discharge it back into the Trent their primary function was to lower water temperatures. The coal-fired power station turned Trent water to high pressure steam which spun the turbines and generated electricity. The steam was then turned back to water before returning to the boilers using the 'cooling water' in condensers. This cooling water then

itself needed cooling before being discharged back into the Trent and was pumped into the cooling tower, spraying out of a set of sprinklers and falling into a 'cooling tower pond' at the bottom of the tower. Where the water was discharged into the river became popular with a generation of local Willington children, providing them with a free outdoor heated swimming pool! Building and then maintaining the towers was left to those with a good head for heights, (there had already been three deaths during their construction). Nearly 300-feet high, each tower was inspected regularly and a ladder was

added to the outside shell of each. It took engineers several minutes to climb up the shiny silver ladder that had soft rounded edges but it didn't take long for them to realise if they tucked their legs around the ladder they could slide back down to earth in a matter of seconds.

Closure

Since closure there have been plans to build a huge residential development on the 286 acre site, which was fiercely opposed by local residents and dropped, and pair of peregrine falcons, a protected species, saved their fate for a while but it was clear that any power



station built in the future would not need these 1950s dinosaurs. In 2016 permission was granted for a new smaller Willington 'C' power station and for the 'Five Sisters' to be demolished. Contractors moved in and started preparing the site for heavy machinery. Then everything stopped. The owning company was bidding in an energy supply auction and didn't win so the site was no longer viable to them and the towers were saved.

Off Limits

The site is now completely off limits, but there is footage on 'YouTube' of several interlopers who braved the barbed wire, locked gates and the mud and water that covers the site a good part of the year, to



get inside these huge cathedrals to the generating of power. It is said if you shout while inside one of the towers the echoing sound doesn't stop for several minutes.

Their future

While the long-term future for the towers seems uncertain, the 'Five Sisters' will be around for a while to come, it seems.

The company that bought the site and had the option of building a new power station has recently gone into liquidation and with no new buyers on the horizon the towers will continue to be a beacon for all those on their way home and a feature of life here at Mercia, hopefully for many years to come.

Pete Horridge, Mercia Marina's own Artisan Baker writes

If you're into the waterways, boats, bread (baking and/or eating) then you can't go far wrong with **Barges and Bread***. It is, to quote Di, "a history of grain, the river Thames, London and historical events ... and bread making, from parched grain to flatbreads, and Ezekiel bread, to how the need to feed the many who live in cities has led to bread which has little relationship to what we once enjoyed without thinking, the kind of bread we now call 'artisan' bread". It is a fascinating read, tracking the importance of canals, waterways and ports enabling the transport of wheat and flour and explores the possibility that as a consequence of early flatbreads being stored prior to baking, the action of wild yeasts on the dough lead to the development of leavened breads.

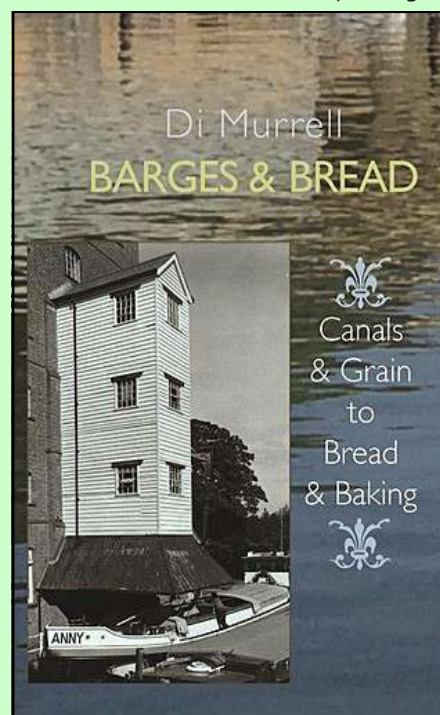
Recipes

The book has many wonderful bread recipes to keep your baking interest more than satisfied as you meander your way through the early days of the water transport system starting with the Port of London, taking on board the Plague, the Great Fire through to Steam, Tugs and Sailing Barges. It was very fitting to end the book with not only a last chapter called 'A Proper loaf of Bread' but also in time for me to complete the baking of a recipe that caught my eye!

The Roman Spelt Slipper Bread recipe grabbed my attention early on mainly because, amongst a variety of ingredi-

ents, it called for Wholemeal Spelt, also known as dinkel wheat or hulled wheat, a species of wheat that has been cultivated since around 5000BCE. I bought its modern-day equivalent from The Beetroot Tree (which was only fitting

even though the flour wasn't delivered by a canal boat, a practice explored in detail in the book) and, in a bid to further link with the original baking, I used a Dutch Oven - the nearest I could get to a clay pot baking.



My surprise

I was a little sceptical with the recipe method calling for just the one rise, and I imagined the bread would turn out to be dense and quite heavy but was pleasantly surprised with the outcome. I suspect that the sealed Dutch oven encouraged a bit more of a rise than the clay pot would have done. I let the loaf cool down before cutting across the middle. It was quite light and airy with an open crumb not normally expected with the wholemeal loaves I've baked in the past. The taste, possibly also influenced by the honey and olive oil was delightful, so much so that I was transported back to my childhood days when I would have just slices of brown bread with butter for a snack.

Proper Bread

It was a recipe and flour I will definitely be using again. I can only describe it as a Proper Loaf of Bread!



*[Barges and Bread, Di Murrell. Prospect Books ISBN: 978-1-909248-51-9]

◆ AROUND THE MARINA ◆



Susan Leech



Jason Thompson

September's Photography Competition Winners

Congratulations to Jason Thompson, Susan Leech and Yasmin Merchant, September's winners, for their autumn-inspired images.

Each winner receives either a bottle of Prosecco or a box of chocolates from the Marina Office.

If you are out and about around the marina with your camera and take a photograph you think merits inclusion in the *Mercury*, submit your entries to tony@merciamarina.co.uk



Yasmin Merchant



Charity Walk Success

Tony Haslam writes: "This year's Trent and Mersey Prostate Cancer walk has come to an end at Shardlow. We have raised £2150.20 up to now with more to come in. My thanks go those people who made this possible and to all those who donated. I know I keep going on about Prostate Cancer but it is now the most common cancer. One in eight men will get it, but if you're black the odds are even higher. Don't leave it too late before you go and see your doctor and get checked out, the earlier you go the better chance you have of making a full recovery. Too many men have died and are still dying because they just bury their heads in the sand and say it won't happen to them."

New Bank opens



There is now a Clothing and Textile Bank at the entrance to the long-stay car park. No duvets, no pillows, no cushions. Proceeds from these collections will go

to our local Air Ambulance. If the container is full, don't just leave bags beside it. Take your bag back, tell the Office or ring the number on the Bank so it can be emptied.

MERCIA MARINA SHOP • EAT • STAY • EXPLORE • EXPERIENCE

Superfast Fibre Broadband

Superfast fibre broadband is now being installed marina wide. As superfast fibre broadband becomes available to your pontoon or lodge, you can sign up to the service you need.

Fibre Broadband Benefits Overview



Data is unlimited - no more running out when you need it the most.



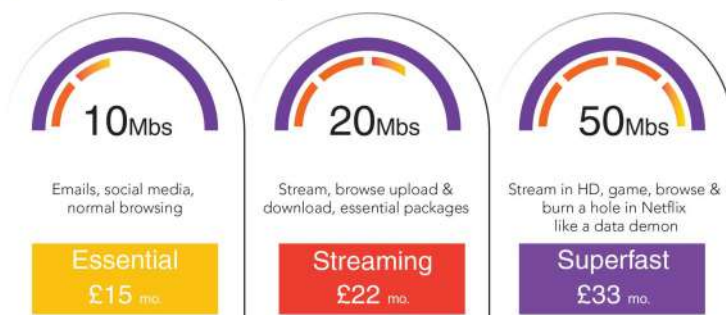
Choose your speed - 10, 20 or 50Mbps download speed (1, 5, and 50Mbps upload respectively).



Routers and LAN cables set up package is £70.80 (inc. VAT) for a dual band router and 10 metre LAN cable, or source your own (FWA routers can be reconfigured to work). A 'How To' guide to setting up is being produced. It is easy.



Try before you byte! Boaters can take up a 1 month trial period (Streaming Tariff) during the first 2 weeks following the wiring of your pontoon. Set up package cost is refundable if router and cable returned within 2 weeks undamaged.



Tariffs above inclusive of VAT. Subject to fair usage policy.

Our thanks to
Midland Chndlers
for their support with this
newsletter

