



Open Boaters' Meeting

with Richard Parry



The second of the Open Boater Meetings was on the 8th of February in Nottingham. A number of Mercia boaters were there amongst a full to capacity crowd of around 100. Richard Parry introduced his attending CRT Colleagues from both Central Shires (our patch) and East Midlands. Richard Parry welcomed everyone and said he had been born in Nottingham, brought up on the Trent and had enjoyed holidays on the canals over the years. He talked about the importance of Boaters and their views and that this meeting was about listening to the issues and challenges from the Trust's users who were, and had been, keeping the waterways alive. The Trust is facing challenging financial circumstances with a reduced Government grant. But the fifteen-year settlement did give them the opportunity to take a long-term view and prioritise spending. There was now a focus on increasing non-governmental income (which, he said to the accompaniment of applause and cheers!), did not include increasing the Licence Fee beyond the rate inflation until at least 2016. Fund-raising, income from property and commercial development and grants from bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and the People's Postcode Lottery were all hugely important. As was the growth of voluntary donations from individuals, the Friends (there were now 5,500) and the involvement of Volunteers in the work of the Trust. There had been 50,000 volunteer days given by people working as lock keepers, Towpath Rangers or members of the Towpath Task Force, by groups adopting stretches of the waterways, undertaking restoration and preservation work and helping at Welcome Stations at key points on the network. Boaters requests led to £1.5m being spent on offside and towpath vegetation and the new vegetation contract would result in a better job being done including a full 'hedge to edge' cut and clearance of overhanging vegetation. There was now a 10-year dredging plan with the money spent increasing each year.



He knew there were many concerns and issues around Moorings' Control and Management and the Trust had a number of consultations running to encourage Boaters' view to inform the decision making. Richard Parry then drew his talk to a close and invited questions from the floor. These included an increase in the number of Boaters on the Trust Council, support for the work of the Canal Restorations Societies, how maintenance is

prioritised, mooring regulations and mooring management policy. Boaters were heavily critical about the speed of some cyclists, the role of Enforcement Officers and the use of Volunteers. Talking to me after the meeting, Richard Parry said he had been surprised (and very pleased) at the number of boaters attending the Open Meetings. He had met people at Festivals, on boat trips (including the one with Bruce and Sheila Napier on nbSanity Again) and at many meetings and was always struck by their enthusiasm, their commitment and their desire to see things improve. Of course there was a range of differing views but, for him, the important thing was giving people the opportunity to express those views. There would be another 20 or so Boaters' Open Meetings put into the diary over the coming months (one will be in the Central Shire patch, so I'll make sure that date is broadcast when we know it). And he would like to see the discussions widen so that more views could come into the Advisory Groups. When I asked him about common themes – he listed boaters' priorities as a need for fairness in applying the rules and regulations coupled with a sympathy where required, the moorings' management policy and the wish to see the non-boating users of the waterways make their financial contributions alongside those of the boaters. (For the Canal and River Trust's detailed report on the Q & A session, ask the Office.)

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MERCIA QUIZ

The next Quiz in the Willow Tea Rooms will be on Wednesday, 5 March. It will almost certainly be booked out as always, so get your name or you team's name in as quickly as possible. Any new moorers are always made very welcome and joined up with others if they don't have their own team. So don't be shy - come and join the fun and games! Drop by the Office, email or phone.



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Aqua Narrowboats

Annual Open Day

Sunday 23rd March 12 noon - 4pm

A chance to have a look around the workshop as well as see inside the luxury hire boats. Also on display (with kind permission of their owners) will be one or two of the bespoke boats built by Aqua. This Open Day is a special one as Aqua will be celebrating 10 years of successful trading, having started the business in 2004 operating just one hire boat. The business has grown and now employs a team of 10 full and part time staff, building between 4 and 5 new boats a year, and providing a full marine repairs centre. Staff will be on hand to discuss boat related enquiries plus free tea, coffee and cakes! And a prize draw to win a short break on one of Aqua's luxury hire boats. Everyone is welcome!



Narrowboats and Helicopters

Mercia moorers are an interesting bunch! The Marina is a village many ways, but the resemblance disappears in a puff of chimney smoke when you realise you probably know nothing about your neighbour except, perhaps, the name of their dog, whether they're good with boaty stuff, if they're strong enough to heave gas bottles in and out of lockers and how often they empty their rubbish.



A case in point is Pam. Not around for a bit then suddenly appears for a couple or three days. But, as we also know, each of our neighbours is really very interesting; got lots of experience in one area of another, some entertaining stories to tell and a delight to chat to. That's Pam again! Pam's second life is as a Doctor who flies with the Derbyshire, Leicester and Rutland Air Ambulance. So if you don't see her at her boat then she's probably on duty - either in the air somewhere over us or (in her 'third' life) as an Accident & Emergency Consultant at Elgin Hospital. She does a 10-hour shift from 7am to 5pm one weekend in four shuttling between Aberdeen and



East Midlands Airports, her Scottish bothy and her narrowboat. It's a demanding schedule but she keeps going because she loves flying and the knowledge that she and the team do make a very real difference to people's lives. She did her training at Nottingham's QMC and has gone on adding to her Pre-Hospital Care speciality. She started flying in Lincoln in 1999 and joined the DLRAA in 2008 when it was set up. HEMS key role is reaching a casualty in 20 minutes or less when a land Ambulance would be hampered by lack of roads or delays. The onboard crew can provide the patient with a high level of care from the moment they arrive and Pre-Hospital Care is now a new sub-specialty alongside Acute and Intensive Care. Pam says she's in the air on every shift and with each of those mission costing £1,700 and with no government money, it's your donations that keep the wonderful service going. You may remember our Easter Raffle last year was in support of HEMS so if you see an opportunity to give again, don't hesitate to help.



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Our thanks to Midland Chandlers for printing and sending through the copies of the Newsletter.



Forum Representatives

The voting lines closed, the votes were cast, counted and verified. The new Forum Reps are: **Superbeths:** Rob Artt (*Piggin Barmpots, Teal*) **Lodges:** Bev Wilcockson (*Fir Tree Lodge*) Congratulations to both Rob and Bev. The next meeting of the Forum is Tuesday, 25th of February. Go and talk to them (and the other Reps) about anything you would like raised! And don't forget to get your copy of the Forum notes after the meeting - or ask to be on the emailing list so they are sent to you automatically.



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The Newbury Coat*

A Challenge for the Derbyshire Guild

Comedian-author-adventurer, **Tim FitzHigham** (*The Gambler, Radio 4*) recreates bizarre bets from the 18th and 19th centuries. For "The Newbury Coat" he had to shear a sheep at dawn, process the wool, spin it, weave it and tailor it into a jacket to be worn to dinner that same evening using only the means that would have been available to a gentleman in 1811. The Derbyshire Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers took up the challenge and on 17 July last year attempted to make the jacket (with Tim's help) between dawn and dusk. One of the weavers was Kate Hession (*Kate Ann*



on Q Pontoon) with husband Terry helping with the carding. They have been at the Marina for over four years (before that at King's Newark and Castle Marina). And yes, there is room on the narrow-

boat for her spinning wheel! This was a major challenge for the Guild and they were determined to do all the work by hand, only using an old Singer Sewing machine for a few long seams. With the team assembled (carders, spinners and weavers, a shearer for the two Blue Texel sheep and an historic tailor and six sewers plus Tim), work began at sunrise. The sheep were shorn, the fleece was carded and spinning started. The four weavers worked on two looms in shifts of 20 minute slots. The tailor was ready, the team of six sewers were ready. The tension and excitement started building almost from the start because no one knew how possible it would be to meet the challenge.



To find out what happened, and for the full story (the outcome hasn't been announced), you'll need to listen to the programme "The Gambler" on Radio 4 (time and date to come!). *www.britannia.com/history/berks/nbcoat.html

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A Very Good Blog Tip!

Bruce's blog (nbsanity.blogspot.co.uk) is a good way of keep up with the daily life of the Marina. He and Sheila are long term moorers but head out over the summer months. His blog is a mine of useful information gleaned from their travels and, sometimes, something new he has been told. A good example is from early in February when he could be seen attaching a black plastic sack over the stern fender. He says: "last year, a couple of boaters found themselves unable to move their boats because coots had built nests on the stern fender and rudder. Once they've started breeding, it's an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act to disturb them, so you might just have to wait until the chicks have fledged and gone off before you can shift the nest or the boat. A rusty, shiny bin bag looks very unattractive to coots as a base for a nest and though it will be a while before they start nest building, Spring is on its way and it's no use waiting until they do." Thanks Bruce! I'm off to find a bin bag!



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Residential Berths at Mercia

The second meeting about Residential Berths was held on 13 February. Robert distributed Bulletin No. 2. For copies of the Bulletins, notes from the meeting, to sign up for future meetings or for any questions, please contact the Office.

⇒ Jules and Lucy held the lists of moorers wanting a residential berth. The first list – for the 180 residential berths – was full and all were Mercia moorers. There were two waiting lists – one with the names of other Mercia moorers who would be given first refusal of any spaces on the residential berths' list, and a second waiting list of people from outside the Marina wanting a residential berths. These would only be offered berths when all 'internal' demand had been satisfied.

⇒ Jules will be writing to the first list in May, asking those on it to confirm their intentions and to pay a deposit of (probably) £150 to secure their residential berth. This deposit will be the annual fee from September 2014 but future year's residential berth fee could be paid in instalments as part of the mooring fee.

⇒ Residential moorers would have to comply with all the normal terms and conditions of the morning contract and provide the Office with copies of current CRT licences, insurance and Boat Safety/RCD. And agree they will move regularly as the Marina stipulates.

⇒ The Marina will keep a spreadsheet of boats and berth numbers. This will be submitted to the Council at intervals as part of their requirement. Boats will be identified by their registration numbers. The revised contract for a residential mooring will include the moorer giving permission to pass these details to the Council.



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HOT CAN

Here's a nice idea for the boater in a hurry, or working on a project boat with no stove. Or maybe you just don't want to cook and are hungry! You don't need a kettle, a microwave or hot water. The food heats in 10 minutes when you push the little spike into three holes in the top of the can. Lots of menu choices about to be released, including vegetarian options and puddings. It'll be fully on the market just in time for the boating season so you can stock up but our Mike Coates was caught enjoying a pre-release snack at the back of his boat at the weekend.



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Mercia on Tour 2014

Finally, as you start your 2014 travels on the system, or are off on holiday don't forget to take your Mercia Marina T-shirt, be photographed appropriately and send the picture back to the Office.

