

FIRE KILLS YOU CAN PREVENT IT

The following comes from a couple of pieces in the Mercury in recent years. With the cold weather now, seemingly, on us, it seems timely to remind everyone of some basic safety issues. Thanks to Steve (www.handsonmarine.com) and Justin (www.aquanarrowboats.co.uk) for their help in putting all this together/

SOLID FUEL STOVES

Feel the panelling around the burner and flue. If it is too hot to touch then there is probably something wrong. Any sign of scorching or abnormal burning smells should ring the alarm bells – literally! Don't over-fuel your burner - it is counter-productive. Most burners are designed to be most efficient when the combustible materials (coals, logs, etc.) are around half way up the height of the burner box glass (this varies with manufacturer so check with them). Regularly check the condition of door glass and sealing rope and condition of flues to ensure these are leak free. And remember not to use your burner with the door open. Finally, do sweep your chimney monthly if you're using the stove daily.



VENTILATION

An easy one to check to ensure these are free of spider webs, dust and grease. And give them a good clean to reduce the risks of knock on effects such as mildew, not to mention carbon monoxide poisoning. And don't block up vents and mushrooms.

SMOKE AND CARBON MONOXIDE

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a silent invisible odourless killer. If you don't already have them, fit smoke and CO alarms. Test them regularly and replace the batteries as needed and always if they've been used. And know the symptoms of CO poisoning.

GAS SAFETY

Get appliances checked annually and make sure this is done by a Gas Safe registered engineer. To minimise the risk of leaks make sure all joints are tight, pipes, regulators and hose connections are protected as much as possible and are not damaged in any way. You may consider using a bubble leak detector in the gas bottle locker to assist with this.

FIRE SAFETY

Fire extinguishers are not on board to put out fires. Their principal use is to create an escape route. Have a powder extinguisher on board. The small 1kg extinguisher will last about 6-8 seconds, obviously larger ones will last longer but space maybe limiting. A fire blanket may be more useful and creates less mess than a fire extinguisher; good to have both at the ready and understand how to use them.

Boat and Lodge Decoration Competition Winners



A wonderful display across the Marina with boats and lodges gleaming in the Advent evenings. Many congratulations to Kev and Ange (NB Chelwood) for winning the Boat category and to Steve and Denise (Camellia Lodge) for their success in the Lodge category. The numbers of boats and lodges decorated grows each year and this year there was also an illuminated cavalcade which headed off down the T&M to the Mill House. What a magic idea!

Emergency Information Sheets

Each boat and lodge will be given the sheet with its list of procedures to follow in case of an Emergency.

In An Emergency – Medical or Fire

1. Make sure that you do not put yourself in danger to help someone else. Stay safe so you can help.
2. If a fire, get out and do not try to tackle it. Alert your Fire Warden.
3. Call 999 for emergency services, giving the address as:
Mercia Marina, Findern Lane, Willington DE65 6DW
Give the name of your pontoon and boat
4. Then call 07831 126796 for marina first aid.
5. If possible, send someone with a key fob to meet the ambulance/fire brigade at the gate.

Information to give to emergency services

Name _____
Boat Name _____
Pontoon & Berth Number _____
Additional information eg important medical history _____

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY
WEDNESDAYS AT THE WILLOWS

The Entertainments' Committee have been planning February evenings in the Willow Tea Rooms. If you'd like to come to any, let the Office know as soon as possible.

They will be popular!!
Wednesday, 4th February 7-9pm - Craft Night. We are starting a yarn/craft group on the first Wednesday of each month. Anyone who is interested in knitting, crochet, embroidery etc at any level, please come along to the first meeting Bring your current project along or if you can't knit or crochet or you are only aware of the basics, then come along as there will be some of us more than happy to help. No charge; coffee and tea available.

Wednesday, 11th February 7-9pm- Mr & Mrs Evening. Cheese and Wine (Beer). Prize for the winners. Put your name down in the Office and also say you'd like to be a contestant! Or just come as spectators and have a good laugh! £2.50 per head which includes your first drink.

Wednesday, 25 February 7pm Monthly Quiz. Always a good laugh; £1 a head. Bar, snacks and nibbles courtesy of Stillwaters Shop and the Office. Put your name down in the Office. If you don't have a team, tell the Office and they will add you in to another part team.

WILLINGTON ARTS FESTIVAL
ART COMPETITION



Time to get thinking! Full details in the Office so call by and talk to Josh. Six categories (Painting, Drawing, Sculpture, Photo, Poetry, Mixed Media) for this year's subject:

“Willington Today”



Most of the upper floor office space on The Boardwalk is now home to Bionical Limited. Well, slightly more than 'home' for Mercia Marina has become the new flagship global headquarters for this dynamic and very successful company. Its business is the global sourcing and supplying of pharmaceutical and healthcare products to clients all over the world. They came to their new offices from a business park in Stretton near Burton – which they have retained as a distribution centre – and when I asked Roseanne Day (Director of HR and Legal for Bionical) about the differences between there and here, she smiled broadly: “Well, for a start, there was absolutely nothing to see out of the windows – had there been any windows to look out of in the first place! Here is amazing; the boats, the sunsets I can watch from my desk, the shops and cafes ... the sheer delight of it all!” It was a big shift in a number of ways; the company changed its name on the day of the move and – even though a lot of them live locally (some from Willington and Rep-ton) - it still meant new daily routines for everyone. Roseanne says the culture has moved up a gear – the 22 members of staff enjoying the new environment which is twice the size of their old offices and configured to suit their working practices. The Board Room, with its spectacular view down the Marina, is complemented by an open office area for a core team, small break-out zones where two or three can gather, individual offices with huge windows, a small kitchen area and a comfortable corner for a bit of rest and relaxation. With Bionical's significant and continuing



growth, the current staff of 22 will increase over the coming months and they already have a graduate programme in place. The new headquarters at Mercia Marina will,

they know, help to attract top quality staff and graduates and it's already impressing their visiting clients. Their involvement with the Marina will grow; they have a running club (moorers will no doubt have seen the group on one of its regular circuits round the perimeter road) and the company have rented one of the Lodges for a year to give them overnight accommodation for visitors or members of staff. When moorers see them walking or running, do give them a wave and a 'hello'. They may not yet have any direct boat experience (that I know of), but they love being where they are and would, I'm sure, be interested to find out more.



Graham McIntosh shakes hands with the Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP following the plaque unveiling.

John Thornton says: We are delighted with all the new businesses who have joined us at Mercia Marina since the completion of the Boardwalk. Finding the right mix of occupiers for the new building, who would work well together and ensure its success was a long process which took well over 18 months. Rather than jumping at the first possibilities that came along it was very important to be selective. When the bar/restaurant and majority of shops had been taken we set about looking for high quality occupiers for the first floor offices knowing that with their stunning views over the water these would be exceptional units. Consequently we were delighted to be approached by Bionical with a view to taking the majority of the space and we are very happy that they are enjoying their new location and beginning to participate in Marina life.



My renewed thanks to Midland Chandelers for their commitment to the printing and delivery of the Newsletter. It's been a five-year partnership now.



The Bobalongs

A notice in the Office, or on the Gates or on an A-frame by the Gates will let you know when there is a group gathering to do a bit of work on the Estate. Clearing the woods by Avante and the Heritage Field culvert were the most recent. Saturday 21 February is the next date when some planting will be done. Come for any time you can; all help makes a difference - even little helpers! Even the cold of our last meeting didn't stop Bob's photo bomb!



PEDESTRIANS ACCESS



Please do not use the main gate if you are on foot. The barrier will go up but cannot then lower because you are not a vehicle and that's what it's waiting for. Which causes a malfunction. Pedestrians, dog walkers, cyclists, pushchairs and trolleys must go down to the the Pedestrian Gate.

MARINA OFFICE HOURS

The Marina Office opening hours will be from 9.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. seven days a week effective from the 1st of March 2015.

MARINA ENTRANCE

The new entrance with its twin walls is now completed and looks stunning! John and Francoise Thornton and Robert Neff, as the designers, wanted to create an entrance that felt special without being intimidating. At night the sign is backlit and, day or night, the understated elegance is very evident.



VOLUNTEER HELMSMEN
CANAL & RIVER TRUST

CRT was in touch in the Autumn, asking if there were two or three Certificated Helmsmen at Mercia who would like to volunteer to move work boats in Central Shires.

Time was short but Maisie Trotman and John and Nancy Harman were ready to try something new! This volunteering role was a new CRT initiative so John and Maisie were trail-blazing and Maisie was also the first modern “Idle Woman!”. They did a couple of moves before Christmas and all went well. Our hope is that, over this year, other Mercia moorers will do a CRT-funded Helmsman’s Qualification so that in the winter of 2015/16 there is a good squad of volunteers ready to help CRT with their work boats. In the meantime, John and Maisie have written their stories:

John Harman first: Having spent all my working life involved with either the RAF or the Navy, the service mantra “never volunteer” is written right through me like



a stick of Blackpool rock. This, however, fails to take wives into account, who, as in my case, make certain decisions for you! This is how I found myself, with said wife and other “like-minded adults” at a meeting of Helmsman Certificate holders who had volunteered to move CRT work boats, the idea being to free up the CRT work-force for the more skilled work. The CRT Volunteer Coordinator, Tom Freeland, met with us to take us through the nitty-gritty of volunteering, the outcome of which is, at the moment, a core of three who will move work boats in the Central Shires area.

The plan was to meet the CRT working party down at Stenson Lock on the following Wednesday for a chat and to decide who would do what. There was the dredger with the grab on the front, the tug and a large and unwieldy hopper to be moved to Weston Lock, the next on their “to do” list. Saturday was moving day, but the three of us all had prior plans. As it turned out my wife ended up hospitalised on the Friday so as I was then available I let CRT know and arranged a time to set off. It’s an ill wind, etc.

Come Saturday morning I arrived at Stenson only to find the dredger had been moved the previous day. I was a bit upset as it looked by far the easiest item to move, but hey, when did boaters do things the easy way. So, anyway, trying to look unfazed by it all, I watched the professionals move the hopper and tug through the lock before jumping aboard. The hopper goes in front of the tug and is held in place by light steel hawsers winched tight. The whole assembly is now about 80 feet in length and obviously too long to go through a lock in one piece. The charge-hand Ben takes it out to mid-canal and then offers the wheel, yes wheel, to me. Not easy if you’re not used to it, believe me; once the hopper goes off line it has a mind of its own. Still, I’m hoping practice makes perfect.

I’d be being economical with the truth if I said we didn’t run aground at all, the tug does have a draught of over 4 feet, and sometimes, well most times, it feels you’re just running along the bottom. Just reverse as you would normally though seems to work, the tug’s a powerful beast. The lock at Swarkestone was manned by Ben’s colleague, but we still had to split the tug from the hopper to get through, and then join them back up afterwards. Bridges are very “interesting” also. Because the craft is so long and unresponsive it needs to be lined up well in advance, but the tug cab is so high it will only through the very centre of an arched bridge, or damage will be done. Quite exciting when bridges are on a bend, but it sounds harder than it is, so we arrived at Weston Lock in good time for hospital visiting hours.

Maisie Trotman writes: John having taken the hopper butty to Shardlow from Stenson the week before, we met at Shardlow to move the crane butty *Ichen* using the tug *Little John* to Leicester via the Rivers Trent and Soar over two days. My concerns were a) that I could do it and b) that I was not taking someone's job. On the latter I was reassured by Ben and the Team that this was not the case. The situation could have had the potential for awkwardness and distrust but this was most definitely not the case. We were made to feel very welcome and useful. Our involvement meant that some of the team members could be on leave for the few days before Christmas and the equipment would be ready at the next job for their return in January.

Day 1: we were met by Chris (the pilot for the day) and Josh & Craig who would be driving between locks with the Welfare Van* and who would assist with lock operation where possible. John and I boarded *Little John* with Chris after he had removed all the protection boards. We set off for Derwent Mouth Lock passing a red flood warning light along the way, John taking turns to steer the Tug while I watched and learned. At Derwent Mouth Lock we met up with the others. Phone calls were made and



we were all assured the river Trent was not in flood - however the board showed red. We waited an hour until Chris felt confident that he was not putting us at risk by continuing ahead. Once on the Soar I took turns at steering and built up confidence - the tug has a steering wheel, not a tiller which I am used to but soon got the hang of it. Eventually we reached Bishop's Meadow Lock where the boats were secured for the night and where we would meet up the following morning.

Day 2: I was picked up from Mercia by Josh because I had no idea how to get to Bishop's Meadow Lock. Today Craig would be the principle pilot with me assisting but, as I was enjoying it so much, I did a fair bit that day. There was a hairy moment when approaching a lock with a strong weir stream coming onto the cut - the butty was pushed to my right and, as I steered it to the left to bring it in line with the lock, the stream caught the tug, so there was a fight to not smash into the lock entrance wall. But I managed to get it in the lock and think I got a "beautiful" or a "lovely" - however, that may have been wishful thinking on my part and it was another time! As the tug and butty added up to well over 70' I wisely handed over to Craig to do the sharp left at Loughborough onto the Grand Union Leicester Line - especially as there was a gongoozler on the bridge (I'm not daft). I worked a couple of locks where either we got there first or the others couldn't have reached it by road and think I impressed Craig with my agility because he asked me to repeat my age (67^{3/4} if you're asking). I had to leave Craig & Chris at the Hope & Anchor on the outskirts of Leicester, not quite the intended destination of Lime Kiln Lock, purely through lack of time as Josh needed to drive me back to Mercia Marina. The chaps would take the boats onto Lime Kiln Lock the next day.

If you think that was it for the CRT chaps - Craig was be on call until Friday (Boxing Day) and I know that he would have been busy as a car went into Kegworth Shallow Lock during his time on duty. So any of these chaps can be working in the cold and wet while we are sitting in comfort in our boats imagining they have all gone home for the festive season.

I had a great time - I love boating anyway - and did something I would not otherwise have dreamed I could have done or have been able to do. Thank you to Ben and his Team and Tom Freeland for their faith in us as volunteers and to Jo James for involving us in the first place.

* It turned out the Welfare Van which contained a microwave, hot water, and portable toilet was, in fact, not functioning! Fortunately I had no idea there was a Welfare Van so had equipped myself for the possibility of needing a comfort break ("too much information" said Chris when I mentioned it! Clearly this is of little concern to chaps to whom a bush would suffice). As it turned out I just drank little and often and had no need to resort to my emergency measures!! There is a cabin on the crane butty which I could have used should it have been necessary.

REMEMBERING CHRISTMAS



We had the Christmas Market, with Santa on the Trip Boat (plus Elf and Safety), stalls, mulled wine, carols and Sue’s fundraising stall for the Air Ambulance (which raised £650!). We had the Christmas Fud-

dle in the Willow Tea Rooms with a HUGE buffet thanks to all the wonderful contributions from everyone. We had a Christmas Quiz and session planning saplings along the edge of the towpath which will, in time, create a hedge. There was a lot going on and we were lucky with the weather which was, for the most part, beautiful!



HAVE YOU MADE A WILL?

Two out of three people reading this won’t have. Which should be a concern at a time when relationships can be a bit complex because, for instance, a surviving partner who wasn’t married or in a civil partnership with the deceased has no right to inherit. When someone dies without a valid will, their estate is distributed in accordance with strict statutory rules and only a spouse, a blood relative or an adopted child can inherit automatically (so not step-children or step brothers and sisters). With no entitled blood relatives (or adopted children), the estate passes in full to The Crown.

There are lots of common excuses for not making a will. The real reasons, for most people, is that it seems complicated and legal, it’s about money and personal matters. Yet making a basic will is not particularly difficult and could be all that’s needed if the estate is straightforward. And for partners, or a couple, ‘mirror’ wills could be a good choice. But any will needs to be done in accordance with the legal requirements – a significant percentage of wills are not valid or can’t be found or amendments have not been properly made.

So here’s a resolution for the New Year: if you don’t have a will or the will you do have needs updating then do something about it in the next few weeks! Wills and Powers of Attorney mean discussing personal matters so you may pre-

fer a solicitor with whom you have no connection. But three of our moorers are Legal Consultants who specialise in Wills and Trusts, Estate Planning and setting up Powers of Attorney. They are less expensive than a solicitor – who is only brought in for checking and approval of all completed documents. And Legal Consultants are specialists in their areas. There is no fee for an initial meeting. Call Peter Hampton (living, with Katie, on I Pontoon *Uriah Heep* – 07817 720587 www.accordwills.co.uk) or Charles and Ann Foster (on N Pontoon *Kirby Mist*– 07906 656218 www.allwillsandtrusts.co.uk). Charles and Ann have specialised in boaters’ wills for many years – both inland and offshore boaters – including overseas property and international estate planning (www.boaterswillcompany.co.uk). A second important consideration is setting up a Power of Attorney which will legally allow someone you trust to act on your behalf in health, welfare or financial matters in the event of your becoming unable to do so yourself. You can have more than one Power, so you could separate health and finance, have a Power for personal matters and another for business and have different ‘attorneys’ for different parts. You can always cancel it – or make a new one – if circumstances change. The point about both making a Will and establishing a Power of Attorney is that you choose now about how you want things arranged in the future. Your wishes and your intentions are safeguarded. *The above information is for those living in England and Wales

Boat and Lodge Owners’ Forum

The January Meeting Notes are available by email or in hard copy from the Office.

- Nigel Hunt (NB Mary Ann) Finch, Grebe, Heron
- Ian Cowlshaw (WB Popsey Bell) Ibis, Jay, Kingfisher, Lapwing, Moorhen
- Tony Wilkinson (NB Cheers) Nuthatch, Owl, Peregrine, Quail, Redshank
- Terry Evans (NB Gentle Gypsy) Sandpiper, Teal, Upland Goose
- Bob Drummond (NB Mrs D) Veery, Woodcock, Xantus
- Mike Coates (NB Aphrodite) Yellowhammer, Zebra Dove, Avocet, Blackbird, Albatross, Bullfinch
- Bev Wilcockson (Fir Tree Lodge and NB Esme) The Lodges