

## EVENTS



All events are in the Willow Tree Tea Rooms and start at 7pm. Please note that there is no bar running for any event now and so take your own drinks.

Wednesday, 3 Feb: *Craft Night*

Monday, 8 Feb: *Music Night*

Wednesday, 10 Feb: *Mr and Mrs (Valentines)*

Wednesday, 17 Feb: *Quiz Night*

Tuesday 23 Feb: *Book Club*

Wednesday, 24 Feb: *Games Night*

Further details are on the Marina Community Facebook page. Or, if you don't do Facebook, contact Louise Davies or ask in the Office.

## THE MERCIA SWAN



Trip Boat Relaunches at Easter 2016  
Recharge your batteries with a relaxing and unforgettable trip along the Trent and Mersey Canal with Mercia Leisure Trips. We have a varied choice of trips to offer, so there's bound to be something here for you.

Mercia's Trip Boat is currently having a major revamp before Paul Hughes and Steve Brazier bring it back into service. The new engine is being put in by Aqua Narrowboats and this will be complemented by a new livery and new soft furnishings. All topped off with a new name – The Mercia Swan.

Bright and shiny, beautiful and new, The Mercia Swan will then take up its mooring on The Boardwalk. For more information on the 2016 season please call Paul on 07398 821650 or email on [merciaswan@hotmail.com](mailto:merciaswan@hotmail.com)



### Pilates Class Timetable

Beginner / Intermediate Classes

**Newton Solney Village Hall**  
Tuesday Evening: 6.15 – 7.15pm  
7.30 – 8.30pm  
Wednesday Morning: 9.30 – 10.30am (Sat)  
(13.00 – 12.00pm (Sat only if enough demand))

**Wollaton Surgery**  
Monday: 9.30 – 10.30am  
11.00 – 12.00pm  
1.00 – 2.00pm  
Thursday: 2.00 – 3.00pm

**Queen Street Community Centre, Queen Street, Burton On Trent**  
Wednesday: 7.00 – 8.00pm

Contact: Milly of Angliss

Access Specialist Diploma in Advanced Mat Pilates

Tel: 01283 703888

Mobile: 07962 249615

[millyofangliss@btconnect.com](mailto:millyofangliss@btconnect.com)

It improves balance, muscle strength, flexibility and posture.  
Supports weight loss and can achieve a more streamlined appearance.



All Ages and Abilities  
Welcome!

Please bring a Mat.

Classes Cost £39 for a block of 6 sessions.

(Please Book a Place as Numbers limited)

Starting From Wednesday  
4th January 2016



# Mercia MERCURY

February 2016 Issue:84

MERCIA MARINA  
DERBYSHIRE

[www.merciamarina.co.uk](http://www.merciamarina.co.uk)

## HOW DID WE GET HERE?



Photograph:  
Derby Telegraph

Robert Neff, General Manager, thinks it through:

"When asked to write an article about likely marina happenings in 2016, I thought at first that it would be easy. However, once I started writing, I realised that as no-one could have reasonably predicted eight years ago that we would be where we are now, so it is foolhardy to predict where we may be even in 12 months.

"Eight years ago, I will have met many of you in the shipping container we used as a showroom or the tea room when our office was in what is now the kitchen and the rest of the building was used as a contractors' welfare pit.

"Now, 8 years later, even my most outrageous of sales' spiels made then would not have been an exaggeration. For me, the most gratifying development is the Mercia community itself. In other words, you. The way you look after your neighbours' wellbeing, the way you welcome new arrivals and welcome back infrequent visitors, the way you look after the marina and its flora and fauna, the way you get together to celebrate or commiserate. It is remarkable and one of the dominant

influences on the marina. Yes, we have lots of berths. Yes, we have lots of wildlife. Yes, it is a beautiful space. Yes, it does have excellent shops and eating and drinking establishments. Yes, the workshop, hire boats, brokerage and chandlery are second to none. Yes, we have beautiful buildings and terrific facilities. However, in the end, it comes down to people, in other words, you, whether a boat owner, lodge owner, business owner or visitor.

"Grand plans were drawn up in 2007, most of which has been delivered and much more besides. The global economic downturn, which coincided almost to the day with our opening, played havoc with the plans. At one stage, banks were unable to lend us any money as they themselves faced the prospect of going bankrupt (an apt word) or being rescued.

"Also, we have responded to demand. It is all very well to draw things up on paper, but quite a different thing to physically deliver what people really want. Much has changed over the years and we have tried to respond to the changes. For instance, the demand for residential berths was much stronger than expected and the local authority unexpectedly amenable. Demand for lodges has also been stronger than expected so we asked the local authority for more. In contrast, the pub proved impossible to deliver as planned as pub closures accelerated due to changes in modern Britons' drinking habits and the financial crisis making it impossible to raise capital to invest.

"We were able to deliver The Boardwalk, which was awarded the title of the Britain's best small commercial building of 2015 in a hotly contested national competition. More importantly, it delivered a pub and restaurant as well as boutiques and shops, a beautician, farm shop with café and bandstand.

"The danger of becoming complacent with what has been achieved is, hopefully, avoided by hosting monthly forums, having a popular Mercia Community Facebook page and, most importantly, through a very active and vociferous community who make the most of our open door policy to make valuable suggestions, sometimes the oddest comments, occasional complaints (!) and even compliments. All are welcome."

## FIRE



We had a recent incident on the Marina involving a modern boat heating system and the moorer's jetty. The heating system did not malfunction in any way and the jetty had a fibre cement board fitted correctly. However, the boat owner had tied the boat hard against the jetty to aid an elderly dog stepping on and off the boat and, as a consequence, there was no gap to allow the escape of the exhaust gasses from the heater. So these went under and behind the fireboard. The side of the wooden jetty charred to the point where it was set alight. The alarm was raised by a moorer who was passing the boat early in the morning and prompt action meant the physical damage was limited to the jetty – though that, in itself, is a pretty frightening sight as you will know if you've been in the Office recently and seen the piece of damaged jetty which Stewart, Sven and Pete cut out and replaced.

Diesel heaters are increasingly common on boats and the well-known brands – Hurricane, Eberspächer and Webasto – will be found all across the Marina. They do their job well and are efficient, but owners should be aware that the exhaust gasses are very hot and exit on the side of the boat. You need to think, therefore, whenever you moor, where those gasses are going. If you're out cruising and the boat is moored against the bank, could the heat set the bank on fire or CO fumes find their way back into your boat? If you're in the Marina, have you left a gap to allow the gasses to escape up the (correct!) side of the fireboard. If you're facing the other way in your mooring, is the CO likely to drift into your neighbour's boat? As long as the heaters have this low-level exhaust, boaters need to be very aware of possible dangers from fire or carbon monoxide.

And, since we're on the subject of taking care – have you checked your stove chimney regularly. It's been a strange winter season so far, but fires are being lit and chimneys do need sweeping.



photograph by Dave Pinkney

Moorers and Lodge Owners put on a wonderful display of Christmas Lights. It gets better and more imaginative each year and is a delightful sight through December and into January. The annual competition (automatic entry!) resulted in Steve Brazier winning the Boaters' section for his amazing Eiffel Tower, built entirely by him in his boat, and Steve and Flo Lovesy winning the Lodges for Willow Lodge's dramatic and dynamic display topped by the huge and wonderful star!



Our thanks to  
Midland Chandlery  
for their support for  
the Newsletter.



## JOHN'S SPONSORED ROW FOR RETHINK



John Harman (nb *Perfect Harmony*) successfully completed his sponsored 15km row on Friday 27th of November, raising funds for Rethink\*\* and he'd like to thank all the people who sponsored him.



It was organised by his daughter Chloe, who is operations manager at a large outdoor activity centre in Somerset. John was going down there to do the row, but as it was organised for the day before he and Nancy flew off on holiday from Manchester, Meadowside leisure centre in Burton seemed a better bet! His row was overseen by gym staff. He said "I'm sorry to disappoint the lady who thought I was going to row down to Somerset via the canal system, that really was the wrong end of the stick!"



"Overall Chloe and friends raised over £2500, of which I managed a modest £180 thanks to my 15 kilometres in 1hour 15 minutes. Their aim was to row 440 kilometres on machines lent by local gyms.

When you have as little rear padding as I do it has quite a tenderising effect, not to be repeated any time soon."

Well done John! And also congratulations on your recently-awarded Golden Windlass. The Boaters' and Lodge Owners' Forum states: "The Forum were pleased to agree with the nomination for John Harman made by Brian Chamberlain for John's unstinting prowling of the premises collecting manmade detritus."

\*\*Rethink: "Mental illness affects a huge number of people and Rethink helps people affected to understand their illness, get the support that they need and allows them to continue living full lives. Rethink also provides support for family and friends who care for those with severe mental illness so they aren't left alone and potentially out of their depth. For more information on the fantastic work they do, please visit their website - [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)"

## GOLDEN WINDLASS AWARD



The Forum were pleased to accept the nomination of Keith Seals, Lea & Geoff Willis and Andrew Smith for emergency assistance with pumps, dehumidifiers and labour when an Ibis boat was flooded just before Christmas. John Harman also received a Golden Windlass (see left).

## COMMUNITY CAR SHARE



Mercia Marina's Car Share scheme is coming up for six months' old, so it was interesting to have a chat with a regular user, Michael Grant. Michael came to Mercia over four years ago and has a residential mooring for his 60' narrowboat. With a background in sailing off the Hampshire coast, he nevertheless spent the year immediately after his retirement touring



Scotland and the Isles in a motor caravan. He kept that wheeled transport for his first year at Mercia, then deciding to get rid of it because he used it so infrequently. For the following couple of years, he used taxis, the bus or the Tesco Bus for appointments and shopping and hiring a car for weekend trips to see his godsons – one in Wales and the other in Hampshire.

With the arrival of the Community Car, a lot of that has changed. Now, having become a member of the scheme, he can book the car on the website in advance and at a time to suit and combine two or three destinations in one journey. So if he's off to the doctor, for instance, he'll do his shopping at the same time. Taking the little car is much easier than a bus – his own door-to-door service for heavier items! Michael also likes the flexibility that allows him to take the car for an hour or two.

He still hires a car for his occasional weekend trips – Enterprise offer very good weekend deals and usually upgrade the car which make the motorway journeys a more comfortable experience.

All in all, Michael is delighted with the scheme. The car is always clean, he's never yet had to put fuel in it (though a card is provided should he need to), there's never been any mechanical or other problem with it. It's convenient, efficient, does exactly what he needs it to do and he is therefore a regular user. When he's away this year, he fully intends to use the CoWheels Car Club for local transport if he wants to visit anything out of the way. The Club now operates through over 50 locations nationally and being a member at Mercia, he is entitled to use the network.



## COMMUNITY BIKE SHARE

The Community Bike Share Scheme is proving to be a great success and, following requests, the Marina has now obtained a trike which has been refurbished, as much as reasonably possible, by our invaluable volunteers Kev & Angie. It is in the cycle station near the Compound/Recycling but being modelled here by the ubiquitous Mike Coates.



It has a rack for carrying coal, wood or gas bottles but may need frequent maintenance and so is not suitable for longer journeys. Therefore please note that the trike is for use within the Marina only.

Interestingly, as with virtually all adult trikes in the UK, it is handmade by Pashley Cycles whose factory backs onto the canal in Stratford-Upon-Avon. Pashley Cycles as the longest-established British Bicycle Manufacturer and that British heritage remains one of the strongest driving forces behind Pashley's operations. To quote: "We have not bowed to the pressure to shift to cheaper overseas manufacture and are to this day committed to the tradition of UK production and craftsmanship. As well as being a dedicated British manufacturer, we are directly supplied and supported by almost one hundred other British companies." The Marina is proud to be associated with them and so good to read of a long term British manufacturing success story. Our Picador trike's serial number makes it about 40 years old, so it may have been to a lot of interesting places before joining our marina community. Please look after it – and all our other bicycles. They do need to be returned to one of the two covered bike stations after use, both for protection from the rain and to help Kev and Ange make their checks to see if any needs attention.



## ANGEL WING

Feeding the Marina's swans and geese you may have noticed that each year, some of our geese and swans have a wing deformity as shown in this picture of a Canada Goose. This is angel wing - also known as slipped or crooked wing. It's a condition that causes the last joint of the wing to twist, thus resulting in the primary or flight feathers sticking out rather than lying smooth against the body. It can be corrected by separating the young bird to its own pen and binding the wing into its body for about a week, adjusting it daily to allow for correct growth. But this is hardly practicable where wild birds are concerned.



There isn't yet – a consensus as to what causes it. The main theory is that it's a nutritional problem – an excessive intake of carbohydrates and proteins by young birds. Where birds are fed white bread they go for this easy "fast" food rather than learning to eat properly. White bread also causes a deficiency in vitamin E, which is found in high levels in the bird's natural diet of leaves, seeds and aquatic plants. Whilst angel wing does not affect the general health of the bird nor leave it at risk from other health issues, it does make them totally unable to fly. Which is a significant limiting factor on their lives. The second theory is that angel wing is genetic but it carries less weight in the scientific community than the dietary theory because angel wing is hardly ever found in birds that have no interaction with humans.

So we have a choice here at Mercia – play our part in raising our young birds by giving them completely the wrong food or make sure that we contribute to a good diet. Wheat and maize are good, greens such as lettuce or raw spinach (chopped or torn to beak-sized bits), boiled or raw potatoes are also good. Be careful how much you put out and where. Don't just chuck it out of your boat; feed the right things to the birds when they appear! Visitors, too, might be asked not to feed white bread, particularly during the spring and early

summer and an information panel could inform them of the good and healthy foods to bring on their next visit. Still Waters Shop sells the floating pellets which have been specially formulated for waterfowl. If you have young visitors, a box of this food would be the perfect answer.

This may not prevent angel wing but whether it does or not, helpful our waterfowl to a healthy diet has to be better than encouraging them to eat junk food at every opportunity!

## WILDLIFE FILM & SLIDE-SHOWS @ THE VILLAGE HALL



In February last year a new monthly 'pop up' Wildlife Cinema came to Willington Village Hall. The Sunday evenings are increasingly popular and well-attended both because of the superb high definition wildlife films and photographs projected onto a HUGE 100 inch screen and because of the fun of meeting with friends and neighbours to talk to the man himself – Dave Hollis.

David Christopher Hollis is a Professional Wildlife Photographer, Documentary Filmmaker and ex Countryside Ranger. He leads walks, gives talks, works with schools, designs leaflets for country parks, nature reserves and walking trails and designs and runs countryside interpretation projects. A Black Country lad but now living near Burton, his pop up evenings in Willington and Swadlincote are a new community venture borne out of his wonderful collection of films and photographs and his passion for wildlife. Each month a new title is shown, with the film lasting around an hour or there might be two shorter films. There's something for everyone, from flowers to butterflies, Orchids to Grey Seals, Ospreys to Vultures and everything in between besides! At the end of the film or slide show refreshments are served during a lively Q & A session. £3.00 at the door (including refreshments). Everyone is welcome so check the dates below and get in touch with Dave if you have questions, either by email ([skua2@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:skua2@hotmail.co.uk)) or phone (07876 276629). Upcoming dates (all at 6.30, all at Willington Village Hall): February 14th (Special Love Themes Night), March 13th, April 10th, May 8th.