GEOCACHING

How about a family outing that uses smart phones and is free, is an outdoor adventure, takes you little or a long way (your choice), builds in some map reading skills, may set a few puzzles and problems along the way and is a version of a proper old-fashioned treasure hunt? Geocaching is the new Pokémon GO! If you've not heard of it, it's a world-wide game that's been running for over 15 years with millions of geocaches hidden and more than 5 million people of all ages playing.



"A 'geocache' is derived from 'geo' which means earth, and 'cache' which means a hidden item or treasure. In the early days, similarities were drawn between geocaching and the 160-year-old game of letterboxing, which uses clues and references to landmarks embedded in stories. Geocaching was conceived in May 2000, when GPS accuracy improved from the area of a football field to 2 or 3 metres. The first documented placement of a GPS-located geocache took place on May 3, 2000, by Dave Ulmer of Beavercreek, Oregon. By May 6, 2000, it had been found twice and logged once by Mike Teague of Vancouver, Washington. According to Dave Ulmer's message, this geocache was a black plastic bucket that was partially buried and contained software, videos, books, food, money, and a slingshot. A geocache and plaque called the Original Stash Tribute Plaque now sits at the site." (quote adapted from The Geocaching Association of Great Britain's website www.gagb.org.uk) Geocaches are hidden by fellow geocachers who go to a place that is interesting, probably one they know and



they think others will like. So for those in, on, or around, the canals it could be at a whole variety of places alongside the waterways – at locks, under bridges, on top of signposts, by sluice gates, etc. Generally your phone or GPS will get you within a few metres of the Cache, then you will have to search - maybe up in a tree or hidden in the undergrowth of the canal bank. Caches vary in size, but are generally small hidden plastic containers where you can exchange small gifts (carrying cheap, small gifts to

exchange is optional) and write your details in the Cache's logbook so the owner can see who's visited and when. Finds can also be recorded in your own records and/or on the internet site that also lists where all the Caches on your route will be. Of course people need to take precautions – telling someone where you going and when you expect to be back if you're going alone for instance. And make sure you're not watched by any Muggles (nongeocachers) when you go and unearth your treasure and the container carefully ready for the next geocacher! There are Multicaches involving more than one stage where the first find leads to the next with perhaps a puzzle or two thrown in and only at the final stage do you find the container (at the National Memorial Arboretum for instance). Or Puzzle or Mystery Caches where getting the answer to the puzzle in advance gives you the final coordinates for a Cache. And variations on all of these – big Caches, tiny Caches, disguised Caches (maybe a disused snail shell!), Caches that are high up or low down. And, when new geocachers build up enough experience, enthusiasm and commitment, they will do their own geocache placing.

Geocaches are listed on a number of websites with www.geocaching.com being the most prominent one. Getting an account is free and easy. Download the app onto your smart phone - it doesn't work on an iPad - and you can



go immediately to the map of geocaches - e.g. in the Marina's area, where you'll see some 50 within 2 miles! Only a few are in the 'premium' category (where you pay a monthly subscription to access all the details), so there's a lot of fun to be had whilst deciding if this is a new interest for you and family or friends which is worth taking to the next level. The other useful website is Geocaching Association of Great Britain (www.gagb.org.uk). And we have a couple of experienced geocachers on the Marina, so if there is interest, we could have an evening information session and maybe set up a local group and our own Cache/s.

The great beauty of Geocaching is that it works for anyone of any age and doesn't need anything you probably don't already have – smartphone ✓, internet access ✓, feet ✓, boat or car or bike or bus ✓, sensible shoes ✓, rucksack with drink and snacks, ✓ trinkets to swap ✓. Nor is there any time limit – go when you want, go as far or as near as you want, stop when you want! You can plan a walk around finding Caches or just see what's nearby when you're

out and about. And if you're a boater, wherever you moor for the night will probably have a cache or two only an evening stroll away. You can 'Cache and Dash' or plan a journey to discover a series. What's not to like?

If you are at the Marina or live locally and would like to have a session on Geocaching (perhaps with a view to having a local group), send me your name and contact details (mobile number for text or email address at the bottom of the page).



Mercia Mercury

Welcome to Mercia Marina!

Steve and Sam, with their children Reece (8), Megan (5) and Ella (3) are recent (and very happy!) additions to the Mercia community. They've been moored at Barton Marina for the last year, having moved onto their narrowboat on the 20th of August. This summer, in a departure from their usual holiday in Skegness, they took it out for their first cruise. Travelling down the Trent & Mersey and going through the four locks, they arrived at Willington, moored up outside The Dragon and the whole family then took a walk up to Mercia to see what it was like. Very pleasantly surprised (their words) with what they saw – the facilities and the green environment and find-



ing it much quieter than Barton - they took an immediate decision to move. The joy of being a boater is that, often, you can do just that. Start the engine, slip your mooring and you're off to somewhere new. You don't even have to pack!

Not that Steve and Sam have done a lot of swapping their mooring -this is their first boat and, indeed, they'd never even been on one before (though they discovered later that Steve's Dad had lived on a boat). They had been renting in Swadlincote when their landlord decided to sell the property. So faced with a move but reluctant to go on renting, buying a boat and becoming liveaboards was a sudden idea and immediately looked like a good option. The perfect boat was waiting for them at Great Haywood and reckoning that they could 'try it for a bit and see', they were afloat shortly afterwards. A year on and they have become complete converts - there isn't anything they'd now rather do than live on a boat.

The children are happy and benefitting from an active and open-air lifestyle - automatically reaching for their life jackets before they step out onto the jetty. They've stayed on at their old schools; their mooring may have moved by four hours but the school journey only takes an extra five minutes and it means the children have the continuity of the same friends and teachers. Steve and Sam are enjoying the friendliness of the boating community and their new neighbours and are very impressed with the facilities at Mercia – enough to cope with the numbers of moorers and "everything is looked after very well". They have an Ebay shop for children's clothes so can look after their business just as easily from here as they could

I asked the two older children what they like most about being on the boat. Megan immediately said it was her Anna and Elsa duvet – she's a great fan of "Frozen" and had been promised the new duvet set for her new bed. Reece, in his turn, was in no doubt whatsoever and his answer pretty well sums up what we boaters all feel - "When we go on holiday, we get to take everything".

Mercia's thanks again go to Midland Chandlers for their continuing support for the Newsletter.



Photography Competition



Congratulations to Pete Hicks for his excellent photograph which won the July competition. It took patience and a steady camera before he got our friendly heron at just the right moment! September competition entries should be sent to lucy@merciamarina.co.uk.



The Tai Chi/Qigong class for beginners will be starting on the 6th of October in

There is a very useful bus

service that picks up and

drops at the bus stops

just outside the Marina.

A number of moorers use

it but, like a lot of things,

you wouldn't know about

it unless you ask or it is

mentioned in passing. So

table. It's also pinned up

in all the Facilities' Blocks

(I think!)

here's the current time-

Findern Village Hall (16.30 to 17.30). If you want to join in, let the Marina Office know now as spaces are filling up fast.



Tesco Free Bus

Burton to Mickleover		
Bus Stop	Time	
Burton Tesco	10:40	12:10
Willington, Rising Sun	11:01	12:31
Findern Green	11:05	12:35
Mickleover Tesco	11:12	12:42

3:55
1:02
1:06
1:27

Burton to Mickleover			
Bus Stop	Time		
Burton Tesco	10:40	12:10	13:20
Willington, Rising Sun	11:01	12:31	13:41
Findern Green	11:05	12:35	13:45
Mickleover Tesco	11:12	12:42	13:52

Mickleover to Burton				
Bus Stop	Time			
Mickleover Tesco	10:05	11:35	12:45	13:55
indern Green	10:12	11:42	12:52	14:02
Willington, Rising Sun	10:16	11:46	12:56	14:06
Burton Tesco	10:40	12:10	13:20	
Burton, Octagon Centre				14:27

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The ReX Factor

Saturday 17 September, from 2-5pm

The middle of this month sees the marina's four-legged friends being celebrated at the inaugural Mercia "ReX Factor", an afternoon of fun and games for all moorers, lodge owners and their dogs in the Dog Walking Field.

But this is no ordinary dog show, and your pedigree chum doesn't have to be super intelligent, or an agility champion to participate. We will have a ring set out and there will be rosettes for the best dogs in each of the four games. We would prefer it if you would register you and your dog/s in advance, so we can plan the afternoon, but you can come along on the day and take part, as long as the event is not oversubscribed. The Marina office has information forms and how to register.



See you there! Roger Filler, Ibis

The Tillerettes at Mercia Marina

Experienced women boaters at Mercia providing advice, coaching, friendship and support for any woman on the Marina wanting to improve or develop their own boat skills

The Tillerettes scheme offers novice boaters (women or men!) an experienced woman boater as a mentor. The



novice boater may have recently come into boating or just never taken the tiller. Many of the Tillerettes say they want to do more and gain confidence but that doing this with their other half would be a recipe for disaster! There are now over a dozen women and one man who have been individually matched up with a small group of experienced women boaters at the Marina, who help them in a number of ways such as taking their boats to and from the service wharf, manoeuvring on and off their mooring, taking short or longer day trips down the Trent & Mersey and going through locks. The group might also choose to meet together a few times to exchange stories over coffee, tea and cake.. This is a long -term project for the Marina and a date for the first meeting this season will be an-

nounced as part of the Events' Programme for the Autumn, Winter and Spring. So if you'd like to be part of this, keep your eyes open! In the meantime, you might like to read a little case history from a couple of years ago: Maisie Trotman (on the right) started boating on holiday boats over twenty years ago, moving onto her own boat as a liveaboard nearly eight years ago. Since then she has single-handed her way across three-quarters of the network with her dog Chip, met with disaster and triumph and, in between trips, has come back to her mooring at

the Marina. She is as devoted to boats and boating as ever and more than happy to share her experience and skills in helping novice boaters gain confidence. Safe boating, she says, is about preparation, practice and patience!

Sue Hicks (on the left) was new to boating, living with her husband on their widebeam at the Marina. Her husband's health means any tillering is up to Sue even though, at the moment, this is limited to trips to the service wharf or, a year and a bit ago, moving to a different mooring in the Marina (which as most people know is quite big!). Her first couple of experiences on the tiller, alongside men, were frustrating as she found they took over immediately things didn't go the way they wanted! Working with Maisie, her confidence grew as she's been left to

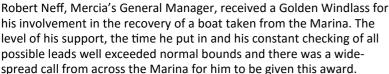


think things through and work them out for herself. Standing at the tiller, while still a challenge, has become a pleasurable one.



anyone go into the water.

Golden Windlass



Whistles on Pontoons

Whistles are being installed at the end of each pontoon to help attract attention should



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Mercia Marina Event News

There are now a wide variety of events at the Marina and, from a programme which had a monthly quiz and a social evening or two a couple of years ago, the new programme for the Autumn, Winter and Spring lists 150



📲 events over the weekday evenings! People go cruising or have other commitments through the summer so the organised programme then gives way to a few marina-wide social gatherings and a club or two which chooses to keep meeting. There is an Art, Photography, Craft and Book Club and two Music Groups. There is a monthly Games Night and a monthly Quiz Night. There is group whose focus is on the Marina wildlife and environment and a Volunteers' Group which swings in to help with the big Marina events. All this is quite separate from the official Marina programme which includes (among other things) the monthly Makers' Market and Bandstand Busk, an annual Classic Car Show, Firework Night, Christmas Fuddle and Christmas Market!



Each community event or group is led by a moorer and almost all of them are held in the Willow Tree Tea Rooms from 7 - 9pm from Monday to Thursday inclusive. On occasions there be one-off 'special' events on a Friday or Saturday evening - Tillerettes, First Aid, Fire

Prevention and other fun 'learning' sessions on such things as Rope Splicing.

To avoid clashes or double bookings, there is an Events' Committee to plan and coordinate the whole programme and to provide all the background administration from booking the Tea Rooms, providing tea and coffee supplies, liaising with the Marina Office, finding equipment and materials

where needed and taking on a more active role (with additional help from the Volunteer Group) for the marinawide events. We owe them (and the group leaders) a lot for the amount of time each of them gives us to enable us all to relax and enjoy ourselves!

An integral part of these community activities is supporting our chosen charities. Each September, everyone casts their vote on a short list of suggested charities and the two most popular become the Marina charities for the year. Louise Davies (Chair of the Events Committee) has just posted on the Mercia Community Facebook

page asking for suggestions for those charities, so if you have a suggestion please put it forward. Part of attending each event or group meeting is making a £1 donation to the charitable 'pot'. Careful accounts are kept and, at the end of the year, the total contributions are divided between the charities. (There are a couple of exceptions to this - e.g. the Save Our Bees group where donations go to support bumblebee conservation.)



Louise will shortly be sending out **Event News** which will carry information about all the groups and clubs and the detailed 2016/2017 Programme. So make sure the Marina Office has your email address so you receive it. There will be hard copies available as well and the programme will go onto the new Mercia Community website which will be going live at the beginning of October. In the meantime, if you do Facebook, sign up to the Mercia Community Facebook group where you can join in the chat, ask questions and keep up to date.

An immediate date for the diary is a "Newcomers' Evening" on Saturday the 15th of October in the Willow Tree Tea Rooms. This is intended for all those who have come to the Marina since September 2015. These people will receive an individual invitation by email with further details, but it's never too early to say 'hold the date'!!

Fire Alarm Sounding? Here's What To Do

If there is ANY DOUBT as to whether there is a fire or not then the Fire Service MUST be called.

The smoke detector may be sounding but did smoke set it off? As well as smoke from a fire (including cooking which means someone's at home) it could be dust or something the detector thinks is smoke, i.e. talcum powder disturbed by the wind. Are there telltale signs of fire: Is smoke coming from the window, or vents? Are the windows soot blackened? Is the boat hot to touch? Is there a burning smell? Are there unusual sounds coming from the lodge or boat? Any of these confirm that a fire is occurring. If a fire is confirmed a chain of events will kick in. Call the Fire Service on 999 - Sound the nearby fire bell (coming soon to all pontoons)

This should alert the nearest Fire Marshall who will take control of the incident

If no-one is home and none of the above is evident it may be prudent to investigate further before calling the Fire Service.

If In Doubt - Stay Out - Call The Fire Brigade Out.

Nigel Hunt, nbMary Ann, Fire Marshall



