

AQUEDUCT NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2020



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AUTUMN MORNING 2020

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RETAINING OUR GOLD ANCHOR STANDARD

Following the global marina assessment conducted by The Yacht Harbour Association (TYHA) it was announced that Aqueduct Marina had once again maintained our fantastic five gold anchor accreditation.

"We are all so proud that Church Minshull Aqueduct Marina has again achieved the five gold anchor accreditation. This industry acknowledgment is great proof of the teamwork that goes into keeping the high standards of our marina to provide the best experience for our boat owners and users.

Our MD Robert Parton commented: "The accreditation was achieved through a site assessment of specific items across several evaluation categories: Ambience, Planning, Policies & Procedures, Customer Service, Environmental and both on and off-

water facilities and infrastructure. A berth holder survey is also conducted as part of the process and this is the most rewarding feedback for us, to know that our customers are happy with the marina and services they receive."

As ever the team will be working hard to live up to these standards and we have several improvements planned across our site to ensure we keep developing and keep pushing ourselves to deliver more time for you!

**GOLD ANCHOR**

LOCK-DOWN HERE WE GO AGAIN!



By Robert Parton
Founder and Managing Director
Aqueduct Marina

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Here we go again. Locked down, so why does it feel different?

Back in March locked down for the first time felt like starting a new school., It was a combination of fear and excitement mixed with a determination to make the best of it This time round it is like the middle years of school, starting the Autumn term. The novelty has worn off, leaving school seems a long way off and there are some important exams ahead.

It does feel vastly different, not only because schools and colleges are staying open, but we have now, as standard Perspex screens at customer contact points, one way systems and people are wearing masks. In short we have learned to live with Covid.

The other major difference from the spring lock down is that November is a time of year when we generally start to see less of our customers visiting their boats as the cruising season has finished and C&RT start to close locks and bridges for maintenance. Whereas in the spring the opposite applies, we were gearing up for the spring rush. Where it has impacted us is the on-site café that normally remains open 12 months of the year. , Our cafe has had to close again as it was not worthwhile doing take-away. So, our four café staff are back on furlough for the time being. The decision to re-open the cafe after the lock down will very much depend on the restrictions (tier level) we are put into. Working with family groups and those in a 'bubble' only was proving unviable.

The Brokerage operation has also been curtailed because we cannot carry out viewings in person. Combined with getting boats in for sale which can be difficult over the winter anyway, Covid restrictions will make for an even more tricky winter period.

We are though still successfully completing sales in the system

with buyers not pulling out. Encouragingly we are getting enquiries from new boat buyers who are generally buying to a specification rather than relying on a viewing.

Though the sooner we can get back to viewings in person by appointment the better. The Chandlery is interesting, we found it actually worked quite satisfactorily during the first lock-down as a Click and collect outlet, with customers happily phoning/ emailing ahead and collecting, then paying either over the phone or we emailed an invoice out for online payment. So, the Chandlery will revert to this C&C system only for the time being. This system also works for the diesel and pump-out which have remained successfully DIY all summer.

Moorings with customers visiting their boats are normally quieter at this time of year, but this year combined with the lock-down is even more apparent. Though on the plus side the engineers are getting asked to do a few pieces of work on boats as the owners cannot get down. The storage yard is similar to the moorings but does have a few more frustrated owners who had planned to do some out-of-water DIY maintenance and are unable to attend to their boat.

In summary, this second lock-down feels much less dramatic than April, with business as usual in most areas. While typing, the American election has a winner, a Covid vaccine appears a more realistic possibility next year, just get Brexit Done and we may have a much more positive 2021-2022 than many predicted even a few weeks ago.

Just need to knuckle down now and revise for those exams!



By Phil Langley
Marina and Operations Director
Aqueduct Marina

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SO WHAT ABOUT 2021?

It's fair to say that 2020 has been somewhat unusual and unexpected. So much so that it would be almost foolish for me to try and predict what 2021 has in store for the wider world but I will have a go at looking into the crystal ball for Aqueduct Marina.

Firstly a recap of 2019/20.....

Even throughout 2020 we have continued to develop the facilities and services we offer and our passion remains to add quality to our customers' leisure experiences bringing you 'more time for you'.

Some of the improvements made in the past few months hopefully will be obvious, new offices, contactless taps, changes to the Chandlery, new lighting etc. But some of the work behind the scenes might not be as obvious at first glance.

The feedback we have received over the past few years has been fantastic but we have no intention of resting on our laurels. Therefore as a team we have been working hard over the last few months to assess how we can improve the way we deal with your enquiries to ensure that we get you to the right person quickly and keep you informed throughout the process. We have tweaked some of our internal processes and in places completely overhauled them but either way this is all aimed at improving your experiences with ourselves.

So what about 2021?

I am sure we are all hoping that 2021 brings with it some form of normality and the opportunity to socialise and importantly return to

our hobbies and leisure activities whether this be Boating, Golf or playing Tiddlywinks! Reassuringly the current outlook does look increasingly positive but whatever happens we aim to continue to be there for you and your boat as we have throughout 2020.

Planned works...

During the winter months we will be revamping a large section of the storage yard opposite the workshops as well as installing a new numbering system similar to that used on the marina.

As part of our environmental improvements the pressure washing bay is having a major revamp. The wash bay will now capture any debris / marine growth etc. removed by the pressure washing and then filter this through a silt trap system.

New barrier planned for early 2021. The current barrier will be replaced and automatic number plate recognition system installed. This should further improve site security whilst making access for moorers smoother... No more hanging out of your car window to reach the barrier keypad.

On top of this we have many other improvements planned for areas such as the chandlery and marina but there will be more on this in future Aqueduct Newsletters.

WHAT'S YOUR BOATING STORY?

WHY NOT SHARE YOUR BOATING STORY'S TIPS AND ADVICE IN OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER - EMAIL INFO@AQUEDUCTMARINA.CO.UK

MORE TIME FOR YOU

We are fully embracing our company motto more time for you with the creation of a brand new community group for all our moorers and storers. The private Facebook Group has been created for all of you to have a place to talk about marina life, for us to give you up to date information and news and for you to ask any questions of us and each other.

You can request to join the group here www.facebook.com/groups/aqueductmarinamoorers or by searching for Aqueduct Marina Moorers within Facebook.

Our social media pages have some fantastic photos and videos, boats for sale, updates and news. If you are not already following us on Facebook and Instagram, you can find us at -



@aqueductmarinacheshire



@AqueductMarina



@aqueductmarina



By Phil Langley
Marina and Operations Director
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WORKSHOP WIDE-BOYS!

Those of you that follow the Marina's social media will have noticed that our latest Canal and Rivers Trust project is a little wider than normal. This 10ft wide by 45ft long craft came to us recently in urgent need of repairs after the craft was discovered to be taking on water.

After an initial assessment by Chris Moran our Operations Manager this craft has now been scheduled for a part refurbishment including several hull upgrades and a full grit blast and repaint. The craft will be back in service early next year where it will once again perform vital canal and river maintenance.

Also pictured above is our new reach stacker machine 'The Hyster'. Weighing in at over 80Tons and with an ability to lift up the 46Tons this machine will be the Marina's long term replacement for the traditional block and tackle gantry located next to the painting workshops. Several members of Alex's team have now been fully trained in operating this machine and can be identified by the large smile they wear whilst sitting in the driving seat.

VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY

While this year has not been anything near 'normal' and as you will have read in the previous article the Aqueduct Executive team has worked hard to put in place new measures and policies to ensure the safety of everyone at the Marina, there is some good news to share with you.

Our MD, Robert was successfully voted, by his British Marine peers, to sit on the British Marine Board of Directors. Robert joins a number of new members to the Board along with new incoming British Marine President Ian Cooke of C-Quip.

Robert will be a voice for the inland boating community and takes with him a wealth of experience and knowledge.

WEBINAR CASE STUDY

safe & sound

Robert Parton, the owner and Managing Director of Aqueduct Marina, was one of the featured members on our Back to Business II webinar on 28 May. Here we reproduce Robert's presentation on how he and his team dealt with COVID lockdown and restart

Aqueduct Marina is located on the River Medway in Kent on the Dartford Union Canal. The Marina has approximately 100 boat hire standing spaces, 17 workboats, 3 moorings, breakwaters and 100 berths. We have approximately 100 staff, probably all of the British Marine sector specific ones. Busking guides, no cover staff etc. They are all self-employed so it's not us that pay the tax, we are not responsible for them. We had 30 full time equivalents, sum working from home, plus 100 odd visitors per week, usually employing four part-timers.

Following the lockdown announcement, I had to make sure that we could still keep the rest of the operation going. This engineering team worked alternately from home and the office. We had to make sure the office staff worked from home. After 10 days of us, the whole thing was still not working. We had 100+ employees wanting to stay at home to shield patients.

We had to re-think about our team. My wife, daughter and I monitored the site and we had two further full-time staff. One of whom was our operations director who is principally our first responder to emergency breakdowns.

Essential communications

The first thing we did was to open up our team, thank goodness for the internet and mobile phones! We already had quite an active team WhatsApp group and that has continued absolutely brilliantly. From just having happy banter, through to important key messages, circulating on the WhatsApp group, we have been able to stand out and communicate that obviously it started us deal with the national guidelines and the local government guidelines right off the bat and we're ready to do this, but while we just assess the details.

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Getting back to business

From the beginning of the lockdown, we've been very strict, very closed, even though we were low staffed for a while. After 10 days of us, the whole thing was still not working. We had to bring everyone back. We brought everyone back through engineers back - it's the minimum number we feel could bring everything back to a safe level. We had to bring everyone back through engineers back in successive workshops. We measured we could socially distance and social distance those people. We had to make sure the people that wanted to return could, because people have wanted to return since having to shield - they have instant the need to go back to work. So, we've got health and safety risk assessments and undertaken risk assessments on our shielding and non-shielding staff. We've had to make sure that it's not possible for the necessary tasks that we've had to be done.

We've also had a range of personal health welfare. Aqueduct already had a mental health support line, which we say to much per staff member and this includes mental health support. That's available to staff with 12 inventors' service and we'd clearly intended that to everyone.

As soon as we got out there we are bringing people back to work and we followed the local government guidelines and had to bring them in at the same direction on others. A big thank you to Action Marine. As you can see, we've had to bring everyone back, I've been involved with, fantastic amounts of support.

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Immediate future

As of the end of May we were back to 19 staff. We are extremely grateful to our customers for their understanding and all have been very understanding during the lockdown. As an aside, we have qualified for the furlough scheme. The East Coast were very quick to implement the furlough scheme and it was very easy to apply for and paid out promptly and our bank was responsive to our request for a temporary loan requirement over three months.

The marina is open to our boat owners, the boat owners can come and go as they please. They can go for a short cruise up the canal. Towing out and down are now DRY with the exception of the narrow boats.

Our customers have been fantastic on the whole. They have come back to us in a very positive way. There's been very few complaints. The storage yard is now open. Folks can come down for maintenance, for storage, for cleaning, for storage sheds and never facilities are busy. Drainage is operating and we're on an appointment basis. We've had to make sure that we would be allowed to open, so he had a very busy time of

Safety

so much easier and it's certainly won't ever get back to the customer just rolling up to a boat. It will be more through us having to take the time to explain to the customer and take them through the boat - at present they view on their own. The customer is more aware of the need to be a trade consider for our own engineers and do a bit more basic work and everything for the foreseeable future.

The boat owners and crew are both closed at the moment. Our remit about bringing people back to work has been to bring them back to work slowly, washing their hands and maintaining distance from customers. So we're a bit more cautious about the whole thing that separation as they're concerned.

We will work on a 12-18 month plan to bring people back to work. We'll see what we move into what will be a different environment in the future. Each area of the business will have different challenges, crafts, cleaning, brokerage and boat repairs - will all have different obstacles. In summary, we're not sure exactly where there will be challenges ahead and will continue to follow government advice as well as our own internal advice and work with British Marine in order to first and foremost ensure a safe environment for our staff and customers.

[See \[https://www.britishmarine.co.uk\]\(#\) to view the full webinar and access complementary downloads](#)

[BRITISHMARINE.CO.UK | 19](#)



AUTUMN MORNING 2020

BACK TO WORK SERIES



By Robert Parton
Founder and Managing Director
Aqueduct Marina

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During late Spring and Summer, we distributed a series of marine industry press articles outlining our lock down journey and how the Executive team worked hard to get everyone safely back to work and to their boats.

Our Marina and Operations Director Phil Langley outlined what the executive team had experienced to get to the point of return and what the future looks like for the marina. "Following the government lock-down announcement, we split our engineering operation into two teams working on a rota basis to protect staff and reduce the risk of spreading COVID 19. After a week it became apparent that supply chain issues meant we could not continue to operate. Working with an already reduced team due to some staff having to self-isolate we then made the difficult decision to furlough the remaining engineering team.

We looked at our engineering schedule to assess the workload and what was deliverable, we also then took into account employees personal situations and risk assessed who were higher and lower risk. The main reason we chose three team members to return at that time was because this number allowed us to safely monitor and implement safe systems of work on a manageable scale.

We are extremely fortunate to have a fantastic team at the marina and all the staff have been very understanding during these times. The engineers were pleased to be back at work and back to some form of normality during these uncertain times. As a leisure business we qualified for a full rates relief,

Cheshire East were very quick to implement our application.

As the easing of the lock down came into play the Aqueduct Marina team continued to work efficiently to bring back staff members and get back to business.

After nine weeks of a severely reduced crew, the Aqueduct Marina team then gradually started to increase on site. At the start of the year the Aqueduct Marina team consisted of 30 full time staff members. From the lock down announcement in March the executive team made the decision to furlough 25 of the team. During May a defined strategy was put in place for how some of the engineering team would return followed by a total of 19 Aqueduct Marina staff back to work as of the last week of May.

A big step we have taken is to completely remodel the reception area, giving the Brokerage team and Reception staff their own individual areas. We have made our pump out and diesel a D.I.Y facility, the Chandlery now operates a click and collect only system and we have removed the gates from the end of the mooring jetty all to reduce communal contact points. Contactless taps have also been added to the wash areas.

With all sections of the business now open, apart from the Caravan site and Cafe, the Aqueduct Marina executive team has dedicated their forward planning to providing a safe environment for all and have adopted the sentiment; easy access Aqueduct appointments, making more time for you.



EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

After a somewhat interrupted summer period (cant think why) we are delighted to get our employee of the month scheme back up and running. This is awarded to any employee who has been deemed to have gone above and beyond what's expected or has shown great initiative etc.

Septembers winner was Sallie Lee who works in our Brokerage department. Sallie started as maternity cover for reception and we are extremely pleased to now have her as an important full time member of the

team. As Sallie has been thinking about getting back into golf we have awarded her with a one hour lesson at the fantastic new local driving range Need Golf Centre.

And as for October.... Well Octobers winner is Neil our new Chandlery Manager. Many of you might not have met Neil yet due to the disturbed nature of 2020 but we are looking forward to you all meeting him over the coming months and years as he helps us move the Chandlery forwards with some very exciting plans happening behind the scenes.... So watch this space!



NEIL RECEIVING HIS GIFT

CHRISTMAS OPENING TIMES

This year our Christmas opening times will be slightly different from previous years due to reduced staffing as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic but rest assured our staff will still be here to answer questions and help during the festive period.

- Wednesday 23rd December - 8am till 5pm (Last day of normal opening hours)
- Thursday 24th December - 8am till 12 noon (Christmas Eve)
- Friday 25th December - Closed (Christmas Day)
- Saturday 26th December - Closed
- Sunday 27th December - Closed
- Monday 28th December - 10am till 4pm
- Tuesday 29th December - 10am till 4pm
- Wednesday 30th December - 10am till 4pm
- Thursday 31st December - Closed (New Years Eve)
- Friday 1st January - Closed (New Years Day)
- Saturday 2nd January - 8am till 5pm (Normal opening hours resume)

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YEARS +
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