

Fund Britain's Waterways Cruise 2025



Jo and Brians Adventures

This is the report on the adventures of Jo and Brian's year of adventure and demonstration.

It provides a daily report of our trip on Thatsit to highlight situation regarding the lack of government funding for the waterways of Great Britain. Taken us on a journey from Strawberry Island Boat Club in Doncaster, down to London and our demonstration outside the Houses of Parliament in May.

We then move back up North taking in as much of the waterways as was possible before making a crossing over The Wash as the second part of Fund Britain's Waterways Cruise to keep the campaign in the news and increase the public awareness of the waterways plight.

The third campaign cruise of the year was to Baits Bite Lock on the Cam just outside of Cambridge joined by the local MP.

The final section records our journey home, at times against the clock due to impending closures of the canal network due to drought affecting the system and extremely low water levels.

Day 1, Saturday 29 March 2025

SIBC to SIBC via Long Sandall – 4.78 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



We must be mad ! We are participating in Fund Britain's Waterways campaign to promote awareness of lack of government funding for our country's precious canals and rivers and watercourses.

Six narrowboats from Strawberry Island and Mick in his river cruiser are embarking on a

long journey some 278 miles to London and the Palace of Westminster .

The boats have all been decked out with banners and bunting, the relevant social media updated, and our cruise master Richard has given us the plan. Now we just need to make it happen.

Our first instruction is to gather at the front of the club house in the campaign boats for the launch party. This is our first faux par ! As we round the corner to our specified rendez vous our engine cuts out. Great! with a bank full of gongoozlers , the very hierarchy of SIBC observing we come to a grinding halt, Brian had forgotten to turn his diesel on !!!

Day 1, Saturday 29 March 2025

SIBC to SIBC via Long Sandall – 4.78 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

The great and the good came to see us off, the Mayor of Doncaster came in her Jeans and no chain... We even had the Regional Director from the Canal and River Trust.



It turned out to be a bit of a false start as once we got to Long Sandall we turned around and went back to the club for the Dawn and Gary birthday party and what a great night that was.

Day 2, Sunday 30 March 2025

SIBC to Thorne Swing Bridge – 10.84 miles, 3 Locks, 3 MB, 0 Aqueducts



A different type of 'Mother's Day' at 12:30 sharp the ensemble of boats cast off from their moorings on Strawberry Island Boat Club, waved the members goodbye and travelled up to Loch Sandall (again).

The lockie there greeted us in his finest South Yorkshire accent, 'they're ere' he announced. 6 narrowboats Rum 'n' gin, Purple Emperor, September Sapphire, THATSIT Aladin, Tonka and a river cruiser Amourouse all fitted easily into the big lock. There was an air of expectation, the long journey to London had begun, first stop overnight Thorne.

Day 3, Monday 31 March 2025

Thorne Swing Bridge to Keadby Lock – 9.81 miles, 0 Locks, 8 MB,

0 Aqueducts



A young man from Sheffield University, doing a journalism degree had heard of our cruise and turned up at the first lift bridge just outside of Thorne. He interviewed Hazel, made a video and took photos for the Sheffield local paper and his YouTube channel. We are becoming a news item.

Day 3, Monday 31 March 2025

Thorne Swing Bridge to Keadby Lock – 9.81 miles, 0 Locks, 8 MB,

0 Aqueducts

The sun is shining, the wind has dropped, and we look forward to a relatively short cruise to Keadby. Leapfrogging the swing and lift bridges, we arrived at the Vazon sliding rail bridge and all boats crammed into the pound after the swing bridge, waited the operation of Vazon. A plausible sigh of relief was heard when the mechanism rumbled into action. We have arrived at Keadby where we meet with Pip and Mick on Oleanna ready for the Trent in the morning.



The weather is very spring like, and we gather on the towpath with our table and tablecloth ready for an afternoon cuppa and delicious cake baked by Claudia whilst we were on the move today. a powwow ensued giving us all the necessary instructions for the important cruise tomorrow. Bring it on.



Day 3, Monday 31 March 2025

Thorne Swing Bridge to Keadby Lock – 9.81 miles, 0 Locks, 8 MB,

0 Aqueducts



The day was not yet over, we were 'buzzed' by a local power glider just to finish the day off. All off to bed early as we have a 5am start in the morning.

Day 4, Tuesday 1 April 2025

Keadby Lock to Cromwell Lock – 43.91 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

Up at the crack of dawn (5 am start) to be ready for our lock out of Keadby, our flotilla of 8 boats were locked out in groups of 3, 3 & 2, we had to wait for some time before it was our turn. With a sense of anticipation for what lay ahead we chatted between boats in the cold but bright morning sun.



That sun did not last for long before we hit a bank of early morning fog, what had we let ourselves in for? Luckily it only lasted for about two miles. The sun came back out but with a strong headwind it never warmed up all day. We had to manage our speed first full

speed ahead to catch up the three boats from the first lock out. Then hold back until the third lockout had caught us up. This was so that when we got near too West Stockwith we were all together line astern ready for the additional boats to join us from West Stockwith lock.

Day 4, Tuesday 1 April 2025

Keadby Lock to Cromwell Lock – 43.91 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



There was a large group of supporters on the bank at West Stockwith cheering us along as we passed so it gave us a chance to try out our horns and hooters whilst waving like people on a carnival truck, this was fun!!

As the flotilla got nearer to Gainsborough there were more spectators, more sounding of horns, then the point of resistance, at Gainsborough bridge there were TV cameras. We made quite a spectacle with lots of boats, all sounding their horns and with lots of cheering and noise from spectators on the quayside and bridge.

There was then nearly a catastrophe when in the excitement September Sapphire & Aladin had very near misses with the bridge. Van and Shirley's boat tilting as it grazed the bridge arch. I had my heart in my mouth! – Brian shouting go on Van you can do it!



All boats safely through in the end with only scratches to September Sapphires paintwork. After that it was full speed ahead to our end destination for the day at Cromwell, some 41 miles from Keadby a long, cold but exhilarating cruising day with the reward of 'Survivors tipples' provided by Hazel and Richard

on the towpath. A well-deserved toast to a memorable day.

Day 5, Wednesday 2 April 2025

Cromwell Lock to Farndon Marina – 8.59 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Newark, 'we came, we saw, we conquered,' the plan for today was to reach Newark and lay siege at the castle. Whilst at the same time making a load of noise with the hooters and horns. It was fairly windy and as we approached the castle, it took some effort for us all to breast up, trying to look like we did this every day, in front of a crowd of supporters who had gathered to cheer us on.

At Newark Nether Lock a reporter had boarded Rum 'A' Gin and a film crew was established on the bank, Hazel 'Boudicca' Owen,

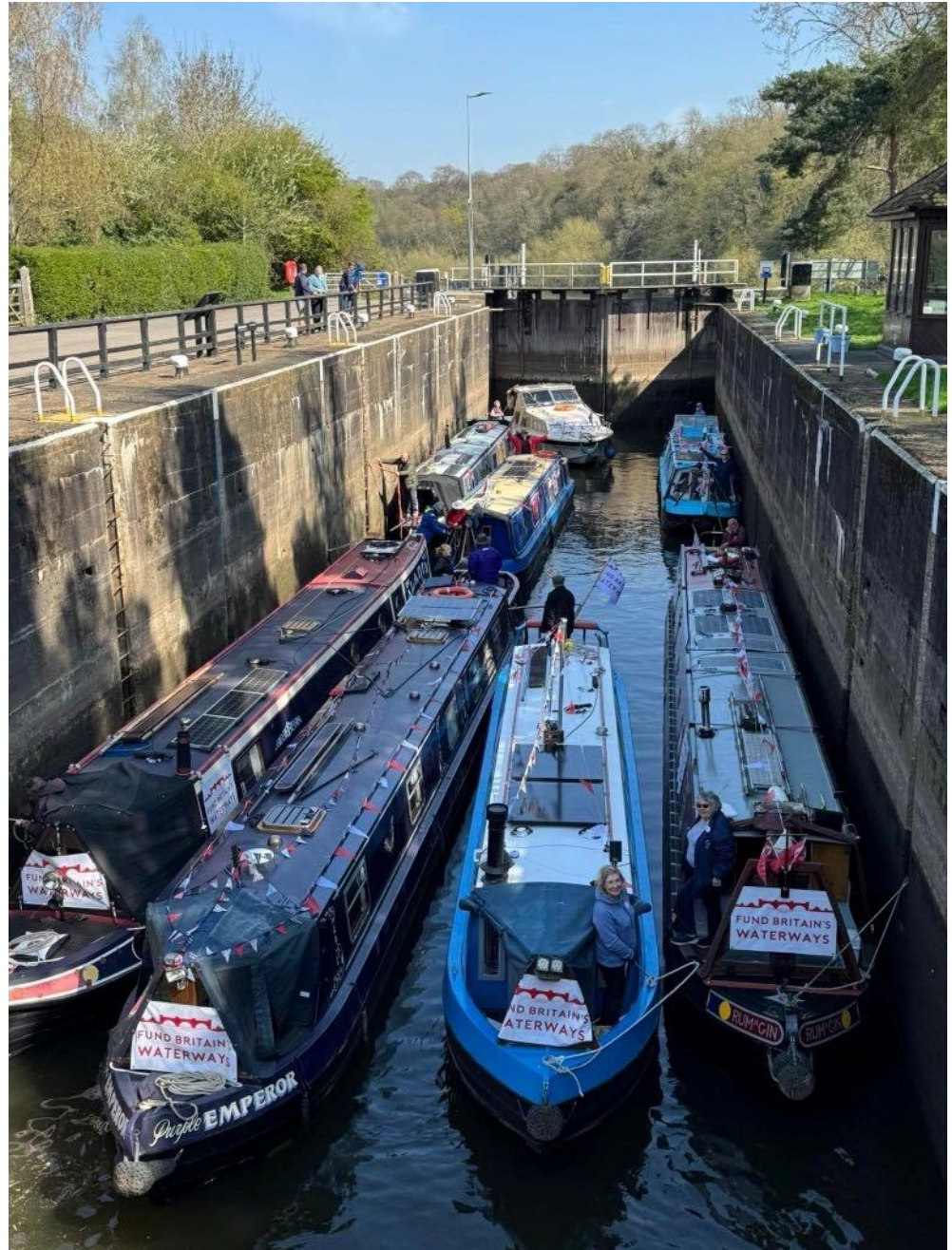
conducted us from a her hatch, after a short address we received the command 'boaters sound your horns' and with that, a hell of a din broke out. After all this excitements it was a spot of shopping at Waitrose in Newark and Brian nipped home on the train to collect his new phone from the York sorting office, his journey was quick and was back in time to catchup with the others at Farndon Marina.

Day 6, Thursday 3 April 2025

Farndon Marina to Nottingham County Hall – 20.16 miles, 4Locks, 0MB, 0Aqueducts

It was another sunny day as we set off, prompt at 9:30 a.m., with the expectations of arriving in Nottingham Trent Bridge for dinner time. The flow on the river was strong and it felt like an effort to speed along with the other boats.

At Hazelford Lock, Pip and Mick (NB Oleanna) were there to help guide us in and 'pen' us up with all 9 boats in the lock at once. We have acquired another campaign boat from Newark and we were joined by another at Gunthorpe riding alongside until Stoke lock.



It's proving to be a skill fitting all boats together in these big locks, however, we will soon be on 2 boat size locks, and this will slow us down as we move along as a group.

Gunthorpe Lock was kindly manned by Dean Hyde from Trentlink.

Day 6, Thursday 3 April 2025

Farndon Marina to Nottingham County Hall – 20.16 miles, 4Locks, 0MB, 0Aqueducts



Canoeist on the National Water Sports Centre slarlam.

Day 6, Thursday 3 April 2025

Farndon Marina to Nottingham County Hall – 20.16 miles, 4Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

Purple Emperor and THATSIT stopped at the national water sports centre to let the dogs have a run. The canoeists on the slalom were something to behold, with the fast-flowing rapids. I didn't think we would fancy ago ourselves.



Then on to Trent Bridge when we moored up in front of the County Hall and sat out on the steps together to enjoy another of Claudia's excellent cakes.

Day 7, Friday 4 April 2025

Nottingham County Hall to Trent Lock – 11.31 miles, 5 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

The boats split into two groups today, Rum 'A' Gin, Aladdin and Kalipso setting off early, going ahead to get to the Soar Boat Club, as Hazel needed to catch a train back to Doncaster. The remaining boats hatched a plan to get us through to Trent lock for the night. The first lock on the Beeston cut was a challenge with a load of chiefs and no Indians. Shirley and I had walked over the bridge to set the lock only to find other boats there to pen up and down before any of ours. The paddles were stiff and the lock gates heavy, so we were bushed after a very short while, time for a coffee and to take photos.



Going through Nottingham, at Castle Lock, a school party and their teacher were out for a brisk Canalside walk. The teacher, who was very smartly dressed in a suit grabbed the opportunity to demonstrate the workings of a lock to his pupils. On finding out that we were there to demonstrate in front of the Houses of Parliament he got very animated, he asked to try

out my windlass to open one of the paddles, he did so and then started cheering, support the 'Britain's Waterways,' the pupils looked aghast. Sir was an embarrassment, their faces said it all. Bri blows the air horns, and they squirmed some more, excellent.

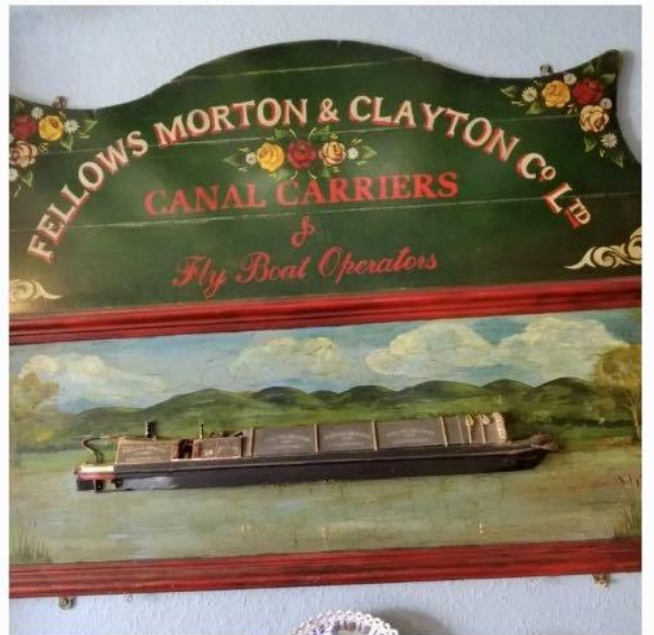
Some boats stopped off at Sainsbury's to top up on supplies, whilst we cruised on with Tonka. Claudia and I worked the next few locks together, mooring up for the night at Trent Lock, on the pontoon outside the Trent lock pub, a familiar stop over for us.

Another busy day, this boating malarkey is never boring.

Day 8, Saturday 5 April 2025

Trent Lock to Soar Boat Club– 6.69 miles, 3 Locks, 0MB, 0 Aqueducts

Today was a bit challenging for some of the campaign boats. But before we go there let's start at the beginning, as it's a very good place to start.



Breakfast at the 'Lock House Tea Rooms,' now that's a good start to the day.

Day 8, Saturday 5 April 2025

Trent Lock to Soar Boat Club– 6.69 miles, 3 Locks, 0MB, 0 Aqueducts



Then we cast off for our first trip up the Soar.

Day 8, Saturday 5 April 2025

Trent Lock to Soar Boat Club– 6.69 miles, 3 Locks, 0MB, 0 Aqueducts

The wind was against us and the River Soar shallow in places.

It took almost an hour and a half to get through the first lock. Six of our boats going up, fighting the wind. Topside of the lock, there were two grounded narrowboats and several motorised dinghies needing to be penned down. This was followed by having to negotiate two sunken boats, a boat dog going awol (not Hugo) and most dramatic of all, one of our skippers took a dunking in the water ! Mentioning no names....



Meet my new boating Hero Mick.....

All present and correct this evening and happy to be safely moored at the welcoming Soar Boat Club.

Day 9, Sunday 6 April 2025

Soar Boat Club to Barrow Deep Lock – 6.16 miles, 3 Locks, 0MB, 1 Aqueducts

We thought we could have a rest day, but jobs put paid to that. Filled up with diesel, empty the bins, the toilet and fill the water tank up. All of which took us nearly up to lunchtime.



And what a lunch it was. Our hosts at the Soar Boat Club Normanton on Soar provided us with a really fantastic Sunday lunch, roast beef and all the trimmings followed by apple crumble for pud.

Day 9, Sunday 6 April 2025

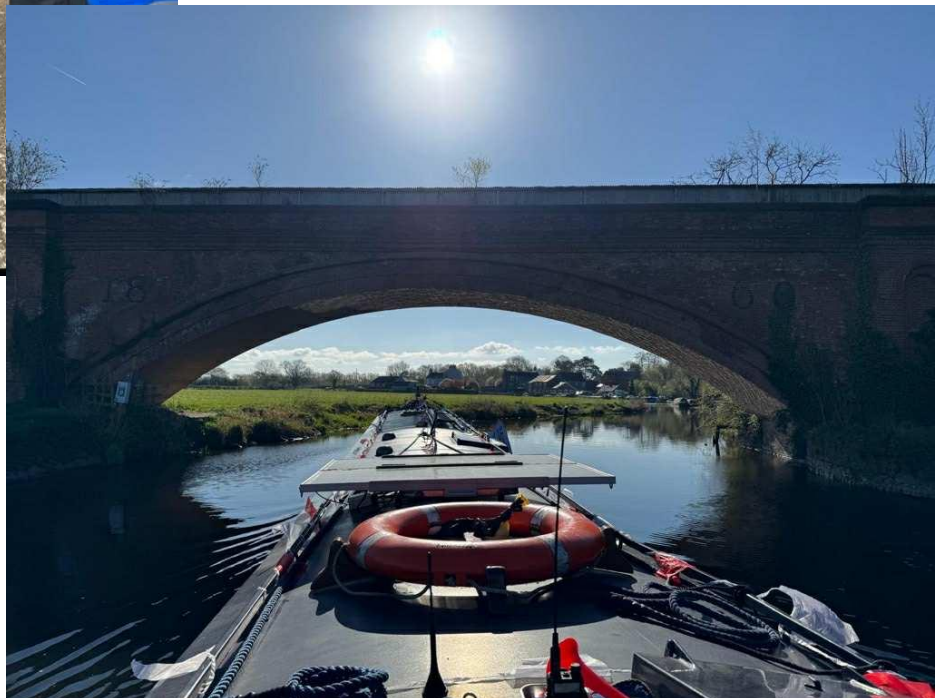
Soar Boat Club to Barrow Deep Lock – 6.16 miles, 3 Locks, 0MB, 1 Aqueducts

A raffle raised £200 which the club very generously donated to the campaign cruise. The hospitality to SIBC was outstanding, their members friendly and their facilities very smart indeed.



After a late lunch, we had work to do, setting off to do more locks, but first saying goodbye to Mick and Anne and John from the boat with the Greek name.

As we set off, we were filmed by a guy with a YouTube channel, we're becoming more famous as the time goes by. It was just a short cruise from the boat club to Barrow Deep Lock. Six miles and three locks. It was still turned 7pm by the time we had moored up for the night



Day 10, Monday 7 April 2025

Barrow Lock to West Bridge (Leicester) – 12.12 miles, 9 Locks, 0 MB, 1 Aqueducts



Today we had our first delay of such.

When we got to Birstall Lock we had to wait whilst CRT finished fitting new Lock gates. Every cloud has a silver lining; we took the opportunity to go to the chippy for some lunch.

After an almost full day of cruising we arrived in Leicester City centre, all six boats were gathered to form a noisy flotilla through the city. It was a bit of a joke really, a few people stared out of their office windows, probably thought it was an emergency. scant people on the towpath stared or ignored us. The boat traffic on the Grand Union so far is scarce, you would have thought that the sudden appearance of a line of boats blowing horns would have been of interest. Seems like Leicester is as dead as Richard III.

Rum 'a' Gin and Aladdin forged on, places to go, people to see, and the remaining 4 boats did a U-turn to moor up at Castle Gardens in the city centre. I was nervous this is the very mooring that Anne Mitchie told me she had never seen so many rats. Better shut all the blinds and block my ears.

Next, to Tesco to do the 'big shop,' with rucksacks on our backs, we walked the short distance to the superstore and returned laden down with shopping for the next few days. Too tired now to listen out for rats, I was sound asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow

Day 11, Tuesday 8 April 2025

West Bridge (Leicester) – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0MB, 0 Aqueducts



The Space Centre. Pottering around on the boat ready for entertaining Ian and Ally in the evening. Our first 'day off'!!

Bri took the opportunity to visit the Space Centre with Van and Shirley whilst I stayed home to potter and

rest after the busy schedule this cruise has been so far.



I spent the day making the boat presentable because Ally and Ian were coming over for dinner.

Day 11, Tuesday 8 April 2025

West Bridge (Leicester) – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0MB, 0 Aqueducts



At 4:30ish Claudia announced that she had baked yet another cake, out came the table, tablecloth and flowers, followed by a huge peach and cream filled Victoria sponge.

We all sat out in a sunny spot on the towpath to indulge ourselves.

Day 11, Tuesday 8 April 2025

West Bridge (Leicester) – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0MB, 0 Aqueducts



Ian and Ally came over to THATSIT for one of Bri's recipes from home, sweet and sour pork with peaches. Bri, looked after our guest and got the rum and coke out for the Marrs. Brian poured the 'measures' then we experienced the results of his measures. 'This French cheese tastes like sperm', quipped Ally. We spent the rest of the nights in hysterics; it does you the world of good to have friends with you on board with whom you can have a proper belly laugh.

Day 12, Wednesday 9 April 2025.

West Bridge to Kilby Bridge Services – 8.22 miles, 12 Locks, 0MB, 1 Aqueducts



There were 12 locks to do today, so we stopped off early, at the king's lock tearoom Aylestone, for bacon butties to fuel us on our way,

The sun was out, yet again, as we penned up with September Sapphire, leaving the bottom paddles open as we left each lock so as to set the locks for Purple Emperor and Tonka who were hot on our heels.



We were welcomed at Kilby, by the CRT volunteers, who had dressed their facilities with a FBW flag and red and white bunting to match. Here, we sat out in the late afternoon sun and were provided with tea and cake, this cruise is turning into a cake cruise. Maybe we should rename ourselves the 'continuous cake cruisers.

Day 13, Thursday 10 April 2025.

Kilby Bridge to Market Harborough Wharf – 15.28 miles, 12 Locks, 2MB, 4 Aqueducts

Since we had got into a good lock working rhythm with Shirley and Van, we teamed up with them again, there are 12 more locks to do today.



After two weeks on the boat, it is beginning to show!!!

Day 13, Thursday 10 April 2025.

Kilby Bridge to Market Harborough Wharf – 15.28 miles, 12 Locks, 2MB, 4 Aqueducts



After about four locks in, our friends from CRT had put the flags and bunting out again for us as we went by.

Hugo is getting more confident, and we allowed him to stand on the stern without being held on the lead, as we approached a bridge, he took his opportunity to jump ship, we ended up with him on the towpath and us onboard. It took a little while to get the boat close enough to the bank for me to get off all the while telling him to stay which thankfully he did. I joined him on the towpath, the right of way vanished, and we ended up high above the canal in an open field. Fortunately, we managed to scramble down to the canal side just in time to hitch a lift through Saddington tunnel 880 yards long, My first ever trip through a long tunnel, I survived!

After the tunnel there were no more locks for today, the group decided to divert to Market Harborough, moor there for the night, look around the town in the morning and then ascend the Foxton flight in the afternoon.

Day 14, Friday 11 April 2025.

**Harborough Wharf to Gumley Road Bridge – 5.91 miles, 10 Locks, 2 MB,
0 Aqueducts**



This morning, we had a late start, walking Hugo in the park and then we went into Market Harborough to have a look around. I had heard that this small town was pleasant, and it proved to be so. With proper nice shops and an artisan bakery where we stocked up on goodies.

We then ventured into a hardware shop akin to 'Arkwright's' with goods piled up and hanging from the ceiling, a little old man with specs and overalls was behind the counter 'Fork Handles' came to mind! Resisting the purchase of more China we returned to the boat for a 1pm departure as the Foxtan Flight beckoned.

Day 14, Friday 11 April 2025.

**Harborough Wharf to Gumley Road Bridge – 5.91 miles, 10 Locks, 2 MB,
0 Aqueducts**



The sun was beating down and since we were going to tackle the Foxton flight, I dared to wear the 'shorts' but first I needed to shave my legs from their winter neglect. Another of my talents – the ability to wash and shave my legs successfully while on the move!



Day 14, Friday 11 April 2025.

**Harborough Wharf to Gumley Road Bridge – 5.91 miles, 10 Locks, 2 MB,
0 Aqueducts**



Bri and the other geeks went to check out the old Foxton incline plain boat lift and came back with the stunning news that we only have another 102 Lock and 58 cruising hours before we get to London (Limehouse Dock)!!

Day 15, Saturday 12 April 2025.

Gumley Road Bridge to Ball's Bridge – 21.8 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 4 Aqueducts



I was prepared for a long day on the cut but happy that there would be no locks to do and looked forward to riding in the bow on yet another sunny day. How wrong could I be!! It was announced that we had two tunnels to get through. Being a tunnel phobic I started to panic; the first, Husbands Bosworth tunnel, was fairly short. Ally suggested that I could walk with her and Jensen, Brian got an app up on Google Maps just follow the blue dot he said.

Day 15, Saturday 12 April 2025.

Gumley Road Bridge to Ball's Bridge – 21.8 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 4 Aqueducts



Off we went following the blue dot on the phone the path was well defined.

Along the way there was a field in closure with sheep and newborn lambs, two tiny lambs put their faces through the wire fence, Jensen went right up to cautiously sniff them, he is a sheepdog after all, so gentle, well-done Jensen.

The walk was only 18 minutes, and the route took us directly to the other end of the tunnel where Ally, Jensen and I hopped onto Purple Emperor, no time was lost. Ian had bad news about the happenings in the tunnel, a boat had entered going in the opposite direction without its tunnel light on, only using a small torch to light its way. Our boats did not see it until it was upon them and THATSIT and September Sapphire suffered damage as a result; our expensive chimney took a beating as the unlit boat crashed into our bow and pushed the boat into the sidewall of the tunnel.

Day 15, Saturday 12 April 2025.

Gumley Road Bridge to Ball's Bridge – 21.8 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 4 Aqueducts



After several more hours, we arrived at the North Portal of the Crick tunnel, this was much longer, I was not brave enough to ride through, so I opted to walk with the Map App, trouble began immediately!! I had no signal therefore no directions with only the Nicholson guide to follow. I worked my way over styles and fields towards the village of Crick. Consulting the book, I turned left onto the main road into the village, I got a phone signal, and the App started to work, the strange thing was, that as I was walking, the final destination was getting further away. This could not be right! Bri phoned, 'I'm through the tunnel where are you?' Lost, I replied. I decided to retrace my footsteps back into the village. I thought I would go into the Red Lion pub and ask for directions. I approached the bar and ordered a J2o fruit juice and announced to the barmaid I'm lost. The other two bar occupants stop talking and pricked up their ears. Two old men one with a boater's leather hat, long beard and scores of metal badges adorning his jacket. I bet that he's a boater I thought. I explained why I was lost, and the 2 old guys started a long rambling conversation with me about the tunnel and its direction and how to walk over it in theory. but came to no conclusion. Bri phoned and told me to stop in the pub; I will phone an Uber to pick you up. I went outside to the beer garden with my drink, a few minutes later a car drives up with Bri in the passenger seat. I glanced at the driver, a lady about my age wearing my dungarees with a smiley face. She did not look like a typical Uber driver. It transpires that she was walking her dog and came across Brian looking perplexed, she asked if she could help. That's how the skipper's wife was retrieved from the pub and returned to the boat to continue the journey and catch up with the other boats who were heading to Watford locks.

The lockies there, were very kind and stayed back to see us through the locks, the end of a long and eventful day.

Day 16, Sunday 13 April 2025.

Ball's Bridge to Weedon Bec mooring– 6.06 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 3 Aqueducts

Setting off at 9:00am we had seven locks to do at the start of the day, then a short cruise to arrive at Weedon Bec, where we had booked a table at a recommended Indian restaurant in the evening.

In the first lock Bri got a message on his VHF radio, Ally was making scones, and they would be ready when we got there. So without further delay (except for a visit to a canal side shop to buy a vintage 'hooter and coffee pot with Castles and Roses) it was full speed ahead for more 'cake'



Couldn't help but think of Rachel and SI when we came across these two.

Day 16, Sunday 13 April 2025.

Ball's Bridge to Weedon Bec mooring– 6.06 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 3 Aqueducts

Since we were now fairly near to Bedford, we invited Sarah and Andy and the girls to join us, and they brought puppy Taylor to meet us. Sarah arrived with Emily and Abigail; Andy followed shortly after with Taylor. We thought it would be advisable to let the pups play in the park and not on the boat.



So off we all went to the nearest park and let them loose, they were very interested in each other, a little 'too' interested! So, we let them have a run and then headed back to the boat. Sarah, Andy, Taylor, Emily and Abigail road up front in the bow while I served coffee and drinks and chatted. Bri was on the tiller with Hugo riding on the stern. This worked well and we could all enjoy the little trundle up the canal and back, so nice to see them all and now an evening at the Brinjol Restaurant to look forward to.

Day 17, Monday 14 April 2025.

Weedon Bec to Taverners Boat Club – 16.56 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 3 Aqueducts

We set off earlier than the others today in the hope of reaching the Blisworth tunnel and me walking over the top without getting lost. I hoped to get this done before our boating buddies arrived there. The day was dry and bright but chilly, I managed to find my way to the other side of the tunnel without any problem, mission accomplished, we were there ready and waiting for the others to arrive, although my 40-minute walk via a busy Rd with no footpath and Hugo was arduous.



Next, we all trooped into Stoke Bruerne in the hope of looking around the canal museum there, but it was closed on the Monday. We paired up to tackle the seven locks ahead. At the first lock all looked promising with a lockie to help.

Day 17, Monday 14 April 2025.

Weedon Bec to Taverners Boat Club – 16.56 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 3 Aqueducts



Then the fun started, a Black Prince hire boat was moored in the pound between locks 1 and 2. After Ally and I penned up a boat coming in the opposite direction, the mooring pin of the hire boat came out and the boat drifted right across the pound preventing September Sapphire and Tonka passing.

Brian and Ally rushed back to haul the errant boat in, it was hard work, it was a really long boat. The party who had hired the boat came running down the hill from the pub mortified that their vessel was adrift. Brian & Ally saved the day.



Off we went again working the heavy lock gates and paddles another six times before we arrived at our destination for the night.

Day 17, Monday 14 April 2025.

Weedon Bec to Taverners Boat Club – 16.56 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 3 Aqueducts



We had arranged to moor tonight at the Taverners boat club in Cosgrove which was an hour and a half cruise from the last lock. As we approached there was a lot of waving, bunting fluttering and two very recognisable boats, 'Rum a Gin' and 'Aladdin' and their crew, we had caught up with our campaign fleet.

A most welcome tea and cake from the clubs' members also by coincidence called Ian and Ally. Then out came a lemon cheesecake baked by Cloudia to celebrate Ally's birthday. The day had been cold, and Bri said the tunnel was colder still, so much so that we decided to put the fire on for the first time since we left Donny.



Day 18, Tuesday 15 April 2025.

Taverners BC to Lionhart Cruising Club MK– 16.56 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 3 Aqueducts

We had decided that today we would go home to get our washing done and see the boys. Ian and Ally were also heading home to Bedale, so we arranged that Ian would take a train from Milton Keynes back to Strawberry Island Boat Club where he would pick up his car and returned to us and give us a lift back to York.



Ian had booked us in to the Lionheart cruising club in Milton Keynes for a week's mooring, so with an early start we turned up at the Lionheart cruising club at lunchtime. THATSIT was lead boat.

Day 18, Tuesday 15 April 2025.

**Taverners BC to Lionhart Cruising Club MK– 16.56 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB,
3 Aqueducts**

Bri tried to slow Thatsit down as he tried to slip into our mooring, however there was a problem, as he put the boat into reverse and increased the revs, the boat started going faster forward, towards the harbour master on the quayside! It quickly became apparent to Bri that the morse cable had broken, meaning we could not get out of forward gear, and was therefore unable to stop. Bri quickly adjusted course, so we did not crash into the other moored boats. The harbour master waiting on the bank side to help, found it all highly amusing. Purple Emperor to the rescue, Ian and Brian had our boats tied together, in order to reverse into our allotted moorings. Ian's entry for this year's award's night no doubt as the longest tow (all 200 yards of it).



Brian's assumption about the morse cable had been correct, so he set about trying to source one from the nearest chandlery. Ian set off on his journey to get his car.

Brian took an Uber to the chandlery. Ally and I started packing up and cleaning the boats. When Brian eventually returned, he declared that they did not have the correct sized cable. All was not lost, Hazel was in Doncaster, Ian would collect her to bring her back to her boat. Bri asked if she would drive to Thorne chandlery to get a replacement morse cable, after he had first checked that they had the correct one in stock, by that time Ian's train would be coming into Donny station.

Day 18, Tuesday 15 April 2025.

**Taverners BC to Lionhart Cruising Club MK– 16.56 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB,
3 Aqueducts**



Ian and Hazel got back to Milton Keynes about 6:30, after first picking up some fish and chips for us all. By the time we had had our fish and chips it was getting dark, Brian started work in the engine room, then Ian decided that it would be wiser to set off home in the morning, so Bri will finish the repairs first thing before we leave. The joys of boating.

Day 19, Wednesday 23 April 2025.

Lionhart CC to Old Linslade Road bridge – 11 miles 5 Locks 1 MB 3 Aqueducts



After a week's 'home break' we are back cruising, on our mission to reach London on time.



Purple Emperor and THATSIT set off from Lionheart Cruising Club with full water tanks and a weeks' worth of Tesco delivery. It was pleasant in Milton Keynes with all the vast Parkland and green spaces, most of the time it did not seem that we were somewhere urban. I walked Hugo on the tow path as we travelled and jumped back on at a suitable bridge.

Day 19, Wednesday 23 April 2025.

Lionhart CC to Old Linslade Road bridge – 11 miles 5 Locks 1 MB 3 Aqueducts



Only half a dozen locks today and a fairly early finish at 4:30 PM. Moored in a tranquil spot away from other boats or houses. A route planning meeting was held on Purple Emperor, how many hours to go in the next few days to keep to schedule and catch up with the other campaign cruisers. We now know there is a stoppage ahead at Denham Deep Lock, the timing of this repair could make or break the entire trip!!

Day 20, Thursday 24 April 2025.

**Old Linslade Road to Marsworth Junction – 10.38 miles, 12 Locks, 1 MB,
0 Aqueducts**



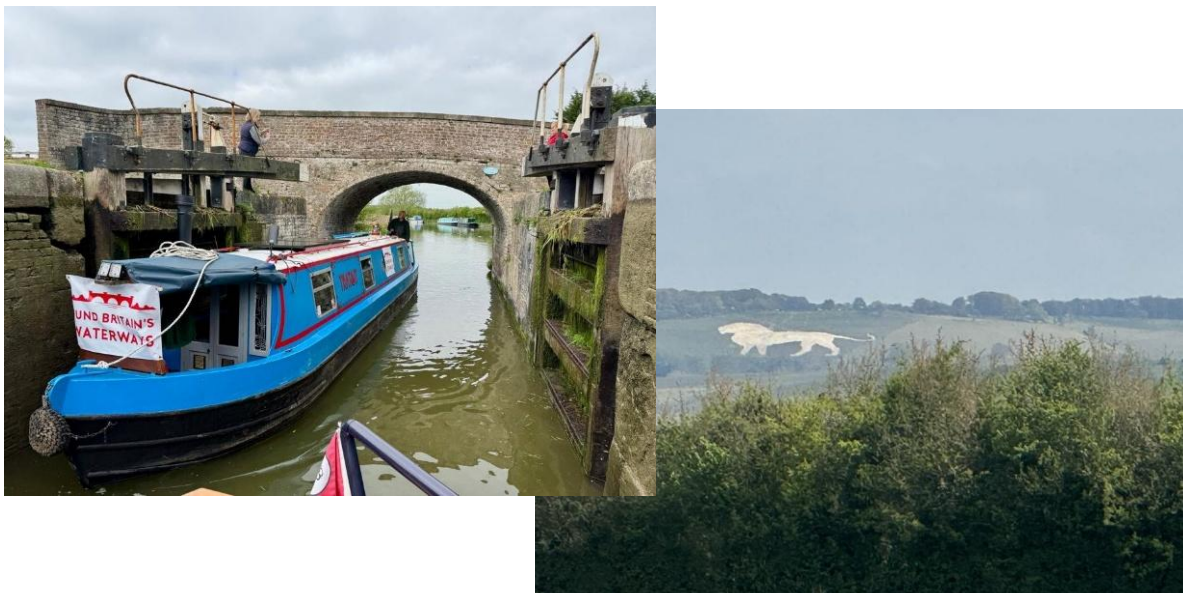
We set off today after 9:30 AM. After the first lock we stopped again, to go and do some shopping at Tesco! To get the Marr's provisions and some other bits and bobs for us.

Day 20, Thursday 24 April 2025.

**Old Linslade Road to Marsworth Junction – 10.38 miles, 12 Locks, 1 MB,
0 Aqueducts**



Then it was boats assail and a steady 12 locks and one swing bridge later, we moored up at the Marsworth Junction.



The weather turned from chilly to sunny. We enjoyed some lovely scenery along the way, the water in the canal was exceptionally clear. There were very few moving boats, good progress was made today.

Day 21, Friday 25 April 2025.

Marsworth Junction to Berkhamsted – 7.25 miles, 16 Locks, 1 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Plenty of locks to get through today and the first flight was only 5 minutes from our night moorings, so it was straight on with the job. Luckily there were volunteer lockies and we were soon well on our way.

Day 21, Friday 25 April 2025.

Marsworth Junction to Berkhamsted – 7.25 miles, 16 Locks, 1 MB, 0 Aqueducts



We stopped for lunch on a lock landing, breasted up together, suddenly we felt our boats moving forwards. Ian and Ally had set the lock and played a prank on us to get both boats into the lock while we were below decks having lunch.

Day 21, Friday 25 April 2025.

Marsworth Junction to Berkhamsted – 7.25 miles, 16 Locks, 1 MB, 0 Aqueducts



The weather was warm so on we went through lock after lock, 16 in all. Mooring at Berkhamsted which had nice, interesting canalside properties to ogle. At one lock a little boy was excited to see our boats and Brian sounded his horn, then Ian joined in. Not to be outdone Brian got his airhorns out. Much to the boys' amusements and the local's disgust. Moored up next to the 'Rising Sun' canal side pub had a drink outside and looked forward to a meal on Purple Emperor cooked in Ally's slow cooker.

Day 22, Saturday 26 April 2025.

Berkhamsted to Kings Langley Mill – 6.34 miles, 14 Locks, 1 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Photos courtesy of Van and Sherly

Lots of locks today, 14 in total plus one movable bridge. Followed by a visit in the evening from Charles Leigh-Dugmore and Janet. Although I had been complaining that I had to clean the boat for their arrival after a long hard locking day, I did enjoy their company, and we were pleased to catch up with each other.

Day 22, Saturday 26 April 2025.

Berkhamsted to Kings Langley Mill – 6.34 miles, 14 Locks, 1 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Note windlass in hand just in case. The moorings at Kings Langley were very good.

Day 23, Sunday 27 April 2025.

Kings Langley Mill to Batchworth – 6.91 miles, 12 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

This is the day we learnt of Dots passing. Too devastated to record today's boating activity.

Day 24, Monday 28 April 2025.

Batchworth to Uxbridge Dolphin Bridge – 7.31 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 1 Aqueducts

It was agreed that we would start early and finish early at Uxbridge where Ian could catch a tube train into central London to give a blood donation.



7:30 AM start on a beautiful summer like morning. Ally and I worked the locks none of which seemed too difficult.



Picked up a guy on his boat called George also on the FBW cruise and helped him through several locks.

Day 24, Monday 28 April 2025.

Batchworth to Uxbridge Dolphin Bridge – 7.31 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 1 Aqueducts



Brian took Hugo for a nice walk around the park when we arrived in Uxbridge where we got two moorings outside the Swan and Bottle pub.

A quick jaunt into town to Marks and Spencer to pick up a few essentials i.e. food.

Planning to stay here tonight and move on in the morning.

Day 25, Tuesday 29 April 2025 – Bri's Birthday.

Uxbridge to Bulls Bridge Junction – 5.19 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 2 Aqueducts



Ian sent Bri this Happy Boater who has just got his Free Bus Pass.

What a hot sunny day for Bri's birthday and what a treat to have two different birthday cakes, one eaten for breakfast baked by Ally, then a German speciality cake baked by Claudia. We met back up with Tonka and September Sapphire at Bulls junction in the afternoon to be treated to Claudia's speciality. We have filled up with water and emptied the cassette in preparation for the exciting trip into St Pancreas tomorrow.

Day 25, Tuesday 29 April 2025 – Bri's Birthday.

Uxbridge to Bulls Bridge Junction – 5.19 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 2 Aqueducts



Unfortunately, we have been informed that the Maida Vale tunnel has been closed for pollution reasons, an electrical substation fire nearby caused this. Hopefully it will reopen before our passage through tomorrow or we will be scuppered, we also want to meet up with Will tomorrow evening as he is in London all day with his work.

Day 26, Wednesday 30 April 2025

Bulls Bridge Junction to Little Venice – 13 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 2 Aqueducts



We breasted up with Paul, a canal art trader at little Venice, when we arrived because we would not be getting a proper position for the cavalcade until Friday. We had also arranged for Will to meet us since he had work in Oxford St today. We arrived about 5:30 and Will came aboard to catch up, later we had dinner together in the Bridge Inn next to the canal, it was lovely seeing him.

Day 27, Thursday 1 May 2025

Little Venice – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



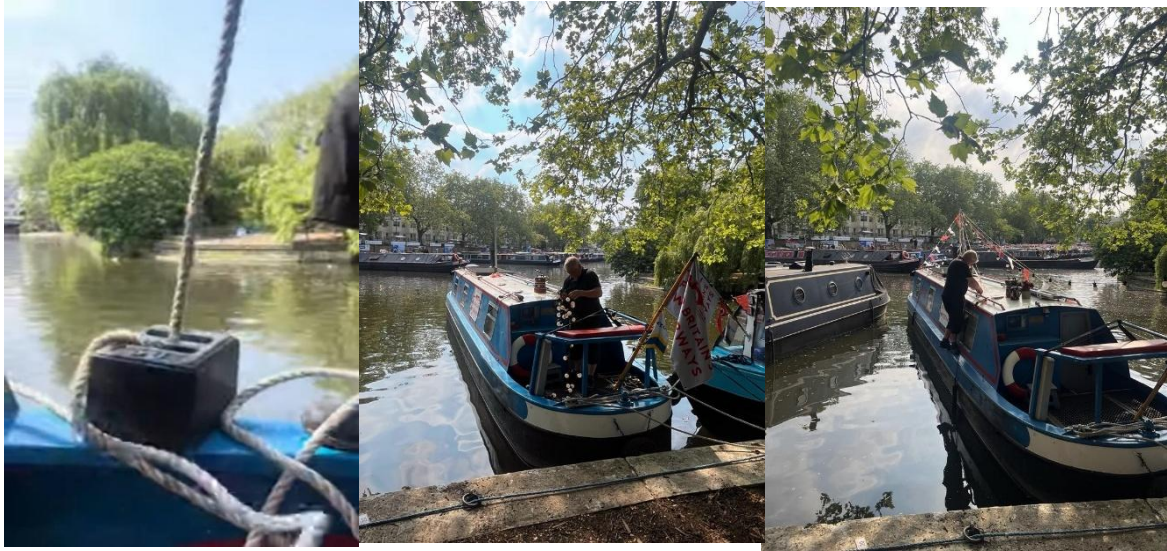
We were supposed to have moved to the St. Pancras Cruising Club today but the Madia Hill tunnel between little Venice and St. Pancras was closed due to pollution from putting out a major fire in a nearby electrical substation that was directly above it. The Mayor of Camden and the CRT Regional Director plus other dignitaries had been invited so Hazel asked if we could all go over without our boats.

The decision was made to go by bus. It was supposed to be 40 minutes journey, the heat was suffocating, we all eventually arrived, an hour and a half later, hot and sweaty to the reception with the mayor of Camden and others who are participating in the FBW cruise. The club itself is very modern, but had a listed water tower, which had had to be taken down in three sections and moved as it was in the way of HS1 between London and the Channel tunnel. The club now uses it for hosting parties on the roof, evidently it provides spectacular views over London, and it is a great place to watch the New Year firework display.

Outside on the canal we could see one of Will's bridges and posed for a photo in front of it.

Day 28, Friday 2 May 2025

Little Venice – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



We were officially given our mooring spot for the Cavalcade Bank holiday weekend. A prime spot at Rembrandt Gardens in the pool. Delighted we shuttled over, because we were at the head of the mooring spot we were asked to drop a mud anchor to keep us in place. Six years boating and this is the first time we have ever had to drop such a thing.



All safely moored and mud anchor dropped we set about decorating our boat for the Cavalcade Weekend with our lights and bunting.

Day 29, Saturday 3 May 2025

Little Venice – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

Cavalcade day one.



We didn't know what to expect but to sum up, the cavalcade is a boat festival, and some really very cool boats and butties turned up to participate. The festival is open to the public who ogle into the moored boats and take loads of photos.

Ian, Ally, Brian and I dressed up as 1940s bargees, the blokes in flat caps and waist coats, the girls dressed as idle women from WW2 in dungarees and headscarf. We went out to look at all the boats and we were stopped by press taking photos and asking about where we had come from.

Day 29, Saturday 3 May 2025

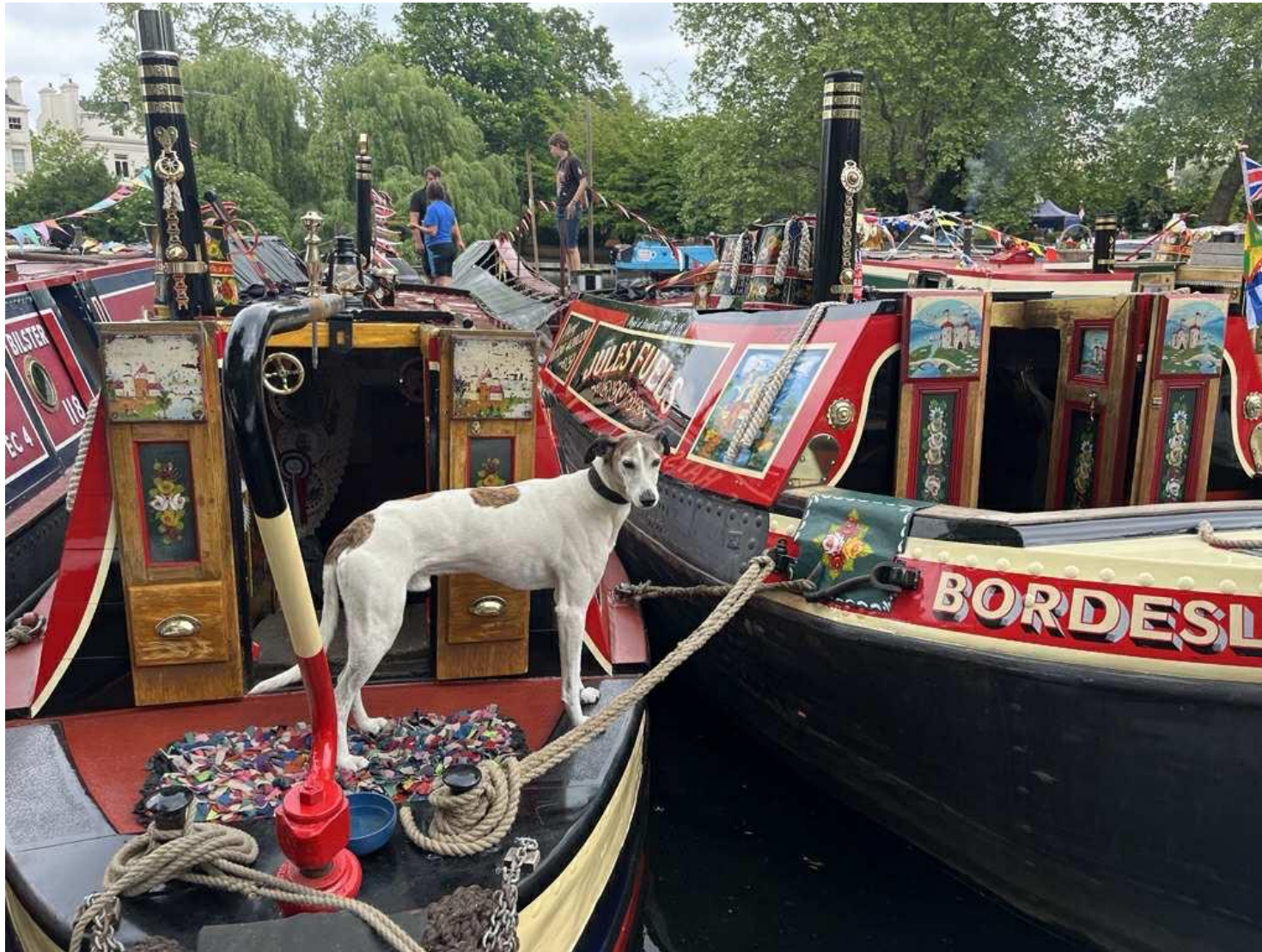
Little Venice – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

Cavalcade day one.



At lunchtime Ian and Anne Soanes joined us for the parade of boats. They were down in London visiting Fran and they brought her and her partner lozza along too. We had a lovely afternoon with company on board parading around the pool and up onto the Paddington Arm. Fran was giving us all the gossip about her encounters with the celebrities when she was working as a paramedic in the area. We had a great time together. In the evening, after they had gone home, we went to a theatre production by Kate about WWII Idle women and we both looked very appropriate in our costumes.

Day 29, Saturday 3 May 2025 - Little Venice – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Cavalcade day one. - Working boat and buttie – Joules Fuel boats.

Day 30, Sunday 4 May 2025

Little Venice – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

Cavalcade day 2.

Dressing up again in our 1940s bargee outfits, Brian had entered us into two competitions. One the boat handling and later that night the illuminated boat parade.

The boat handling went to plan, apart from when he had to bring the boat to a halt in front of the judges' tents and shake a judges' hand. As he started to position himself and the boat to pull alongside the judges' tent, it was at that moment that a huge electric party barge blocked the way.



The skipper handled it well and managed to manoeuvre THATSIT to the correct position, allowing the party boat to pass, then going alongside the judges' tent to shake the correct hand. Things must have been good as Bri won the boat handling competition.

Day 30, Sunday 4 May 2025

Little Venice – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

Cavalcade day 2.



He only went and won the Roger Squires Trophy.

Day 30, Sunday 4 May 2025

Little Venice – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts - Cavalcade day 2.



We were the only boats from SIBC entering any of the competitions, Hazel had put the others off the illuminated parade by telling them that it was dangerous in the dark. As you know Brian likes a challenge so, off we go, lights, bunting and an enormous Yorkshire flag flying from the scaffold pole in the centre of the boat. Of course, the challenge was to erect said Pole as we emerged from under the bridge, There was music blasting out and crowds gathered on the bridge and all around the pool. But the challenge was met, the pole erected and off we went. Our details were announced over the tanyoy as we entered the pool, waving and hooting our horns all the way around and then back into our mooring. The other illuminated boats followed and paraded around the pool whilst music blasted out and we all sang along....great fun

Day 31, Monday 5 May 2025

Little Venice to Kingsland Road Bridge – 5.34 miles, 6 Locks, 0 MB,

0 Aqueducts

After a wonderful few days enjoying the cavalcade at little Venice, we had to move on early this morning in order to reach our final destination of Westminster for Wednesday.

Due to a lot of indecisive and conflicting plans regarding the opening of the tunnel (or not) at Maida Hill Tunnel and the passage (or not) through the doomed City Road Lock we heard that it may be possible to conquer both. The other possibility was to backtrack to Bulls Bridge and then onto Brentford and down the Thames to the barrier before stemming the tide and returning to Limehouse Lock. This alternative would take two very long days and a lot more locks, let's take a risk and do the short route.

First thing, we dismantled all the lights and flags then set off around 10 a.m. The Maida Hill Tunnel was opened, it's only short so I was happy to go through. Next getting through Camden Town without being accosted by gongoozlers' or the addicts or any other unwanted attention. All good, although a drunk 'tried' to help with a lock gate and found himself on the other side hovering over the lock! At Islington tunnel I decided to be brave and stay on board. Brian serenaded me with silly songs to distract me, it worked. We were through the other side in no time.

Now the random parts of this day really began. There had to be assisted passage through city lock as it is broken. We queued patiently and allowed random extra boats through before us, as we were guaranteed assisted passage after the scheduled close time for the lock. CRT staff led each boat through with ropes only.

Both Purple Emperor and THATSIT were safely the other side on our way to Limehouse. however, on the way we picked up a hitchhiker, we were asked to tow an abandoned boat through City lock before it was closed for repair. This we did and left it moored up on the next lock landing.



Day 31, Monday 5 May 2025

Little Venice to Kingsland Road Bridge – 5.34 miles, 6 Locks, 0 MB,

0 Aqueducts



After leaving the 'hitchhiker' behind we continued on to our overnight mooring which was around 3-4 hours cruise away from Limehouse. Not before making a stop to remove a shopping trolley from a lock landing!

Day 32, Tuesday 6 May 2025

Kingsland Road Bridge to Limehouse Basin – 3.06 miles, 6 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



No mad rush this morning to set off as we only had three to four hours cruising to get to our destination. When we arrived at Limehouse the fuel boat was moored up, so we pulled alongside

and filled our tanks with diesel ready for tomorrow.

It was then time to walk Hugo and take a look at what Limehouse lock had to offer, prior to attending a safety briefing about our trip along the tidal Thames tomorrow.



Day 32, Tuesday 6 May 2025

Kingsland Road Bridge to Limehouse Basin – 3.06 miles, 6 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Briefing completed we were treated to a two-course meal, Brian had lamb Shank, and I went for the salmon. Early night ready for the excitement that awaits us tomorrow.

Day 33, Wednesday 7 May 2025 – The BIG day

Limehouse to PoW/West India Dock – 10.19 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

**Fund British Waterways Cruise, destination Palace of Westminster, protest.
Limehouse to West India dock tidal Thames with gathering of 27 narrowboats
in front of the Palace of Westminster to sound horns in protest to the
governments decline in funding to Britain's waterways.**



Day 33, Wednesday 7 May 2025 – The BIG day

Limehouse to PoW/West India Dock – 10.19 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Day 33, Wednesday 7 May 2025 – The BIG day

Limehouse to PoW/West India Dock – 10.19 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Day 33, Wednesday 7 May 2025 – The BIG day

Limehouse to PoW/West India Dock – 10.19 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



It was an 8:00 a.m. start, we were penning out of Limehouse lock in groups of four, to go down the Thames to the Palace of Westminster. We were the second group penned out, which meant we arrived an hour before the due time to sound the horns. We therefore had to 'tread water' for nearly an hour, whilst

those boats that were penned out after us had a chance to arrive and take up their positions.

The Thames was very choppy, there were supporters on the bank, there with their banners also. At the appointed time we all started to sound our horns, a hell of a lot of noise was made which could be heard, (we were told afterwards) inside the building.



Day 33, Wednesday 7 May 2025 – The BIG day

Limehouse to PoW/West India Dock – 10.19 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Day 33, Wednesday 7 May 2025 – The BIG day

Limehouse to PoW/West India Dock – 10.19 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Day 33, Wednesday 7 May 2025 – The BIG day

Limehouse to PoW/West India Dock – 10.19 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



We had a police escort, after the protest, on the way back to Limehouse we spotted an Uber Clipper with what looked like VIPs on the back, there were TV cameras also. We then realised who the VIP was, it was King Charles! What a surprise to have His Majesty joining in!!

Day 33, Wednesday 7 May 2025 – The BIG day

Limehouse to PoW/West India Dock – 10.19 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



On the way back it became really choppy, I started to feel seasick. I then proceeded to vomit over the side of the boat. Luckily it was after the King had gone by. Bri was very helpful, whilst I was being sick, giving guidance on what side of the boat to be sick over to stop it being blown back in the wind. Back off the tidal Thames at West India Dock, Canary Wharf, we moored up for the evening. We then had a hot debrief in a theatre bar with drinks provided, followed by a survivor's supper at a local restaurant. A Day to remember.

Day 34, Thursday 8 May 2025

West India Dock to Taggs Island, Hampton – 27.31 miles, 4 Locks, 0 MB, 0Aqueducts



Up early again today to catch the tide out of West India dock, Canary Wharf and on up the tidal Thames in the direction of Teddington. The lock is huge, all the FBW boats piled in, 25 boats in one lock and still we didn't go anywhere near filling it. Some boats were heading to Teddington, some to Brentford and some just a short trip to Limehouse.

Day 34, Thursday 8 May 2025

West India Dock to Taggs Island, Hampton – 27.31 miles, 4 Locks, 0 MB, 0Aqueducts



They even opened Tower Bridge for us!

Day 34, Thursday 8 May 2025

West India Dock to Taggs Island, Hampton – 27.31 miles, 4 Locks, 0 MB, 0Aqueducts



We went past all the major London sights as we went along the Thames. We even got a wave from the policeman standing on the terraces of the houses of parliament's 'not so noisy today' we shouted.

Day 34, Thursday 8 May 2025

West India Dock to Taggs Island, Hampton – 27.31 miles, 4 Locks, 0 MB, 0Aqueducts



On to Teddington lock, how stressful! The non tidal Thames is managed by the Environment Agency, and you need a gold licence, we then found out that the gold licence means more rules. At Teddington we were instructed to turn off our engines whilst in the lock. THATSIT's engine then failed to start up again. There is some intermittent fault in the electrics that means it does not turn the starter motor over when the engine is hot. Brian asked me to take Hugo for a 'wee' break, whilst he tried to cool the engine down, so that the engine would restart.

The woman lockkeeper, in her overzealous efficiency, shouted at me 'madame get back on your boat' in no uncertain terms. After about 10 minutes of trying, the engine started up and we were able to escape her. Thank God. A few more locks, more strict rules, which of course Brian ignored, more stress for me. We moored up at Hampton Ferry for the night, where Brian bought us all whippy ice creams and we sat out on the grassed area to agree a plan for the next part of our adventure.



Day 35, Friday 9 May 2025

Hampton to Windsor Bridge – 18.91 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 0Aqueducts



We moved on from Hampton Ferry to Windsor where Brian said we could have a day off. However, before we did, Ally and Ian had to do some old time washing and even got out a hand operated mangle.

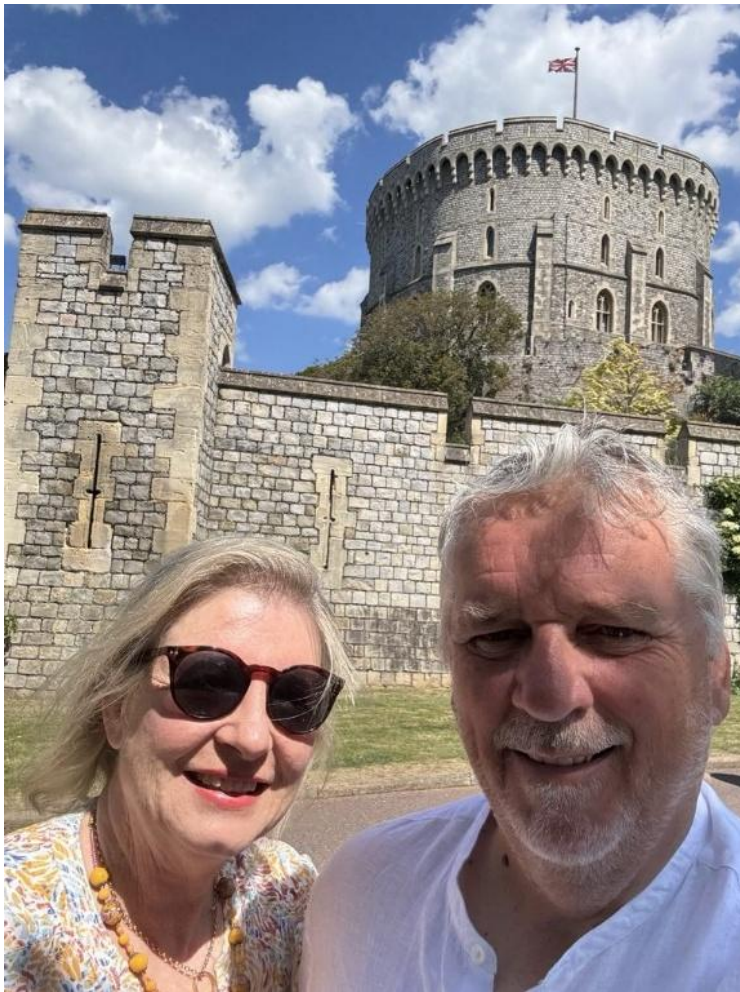
We had to pay for these moorings, 3-minute walk from Windsor Castle, with your own riverside decking, all for the princely sum of £8.00 per night.

Day 36, Saturday 10 May 2025

Windsor Bridge – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

A DAY OFF IN WINDSOR!!!!

The weather continues to be sunny and warm. Today was to be a day of rest, well not on the move at least. We booked tickets for a tour of Windsor Castle. It was well worth it, at £31.00 each. First, we encountered the changing of the guard, they were Gurkhas. Next, we went through airport style security, and then picked up headsets for the audio tour.



Day 36, Saturday 10 May 2025

Windsor Bridge – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

A DAY OFF IN WINDSOR!!!!



The highlight of the castle for me was St. Georges Chapel and to stand near the tomb of Queen Elizabeth II and the vaults of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour.

Day 36, Saturday 10 May 2025

Windsor Bridge – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

A DAY OFF IN WINDSOR!!!!



Afterwards we had a romp up to Eton to view the college buildings, saw a fair few Eton boys, going to play tennis on their Saturday afternoon off. It was then a short trip up the river to fill up with water. It has been good to have a day off from boating today after so many days travelling.

A DAY OFF IN WINDSOR



Day 37, Sunday 11 May 2025

Windsor Bridge to Marlow Bridge – 12.84 miles, 5 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Today was predicted to be very hot, so after doing all our preparations yesterday, we set off at 10 a.m. Several locks today, mostly manned, so I sat in the bow on the new cushions ogling the amazing multi-million-pound properties along this stretch of the Thames. Mooring up this evening in Marlow 5:45 p.m.

Day 38, Monday 12 May 2025

Marlow Bridge to Rod Eyot (Henley) – 8.78 miles, 3 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

They have been setting the River ready for the Henley Boat Regatta, so we had to travel a long it, THATSIT and September Sapphire couldn't help themselves and raced down the mile and a bit course.



We had to pay £15 for the night's mooring in Henley so we decided to make the most of it and have a walk up to the town and then on to a Canalside pub. Just to say we had been and had a drink on the pub terrace.

Day 39, Tuesday 13 May 2025

Henley to Beale Park – 16.69 miles, 6 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

Early start 8:30 a.m. we have now decided to split up from Purple Emperor and September Sapphire since we need to get home for a week and have planned to leave THATSIT at Thurpp Boat Club.

Another sunny day cruising, mostly manned locks, a shop at Tesco's extra and onto a delightful mooring at Beale wildlife reserve just above Whitechurch lock Reading at about 5 p.m. It is the first day travelling by ourselves since we set off on the 31st of March and our tranquil mooring without any other boats is our que to relax, we deserved it.



The view we should have had

The view we ended up with

8:30 p.m. sound of a boat horn, who's that I said, Brian looked out of the window and exclaimed its Purple Emperor. They could not find a mooring earlier, knew where we were, so carried on to join us. So much for a tranquil mooring by ourselves but it was also a pleasure to see them.

Day 40, Wednesday 14 May 2025

Beale Park to Day's Lock – 13.91 miles, 4 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



We agreed with Ian and Ally that we would have a relaxed start, so departed these lovely moorings this morning around 10:15 a.m. A little further up the river we popped into Goring-on-Thames, a posh village where I bought a loaf of bread and two sausage rolls. The bill came to almost £20!! There is definitely a North/South divide, it is apparent as we spend time here on the Thames.



Day 40, Wednesday 14 May 2025

Beale Park to Day's Lock – 13.91 miles, 4 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Riverside properties for me and a mooring just above Day's Lock near Dorchester. It looks very dog friendly with open fields and so the pooches are happy. Hugo learning to jump out and hang around by the boat when we are sitting out without being tied up. Good boy hugs.

Day 41, Thursday 15 May 2025

Day's Lock to Abingdon Lock – 8.06 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Today the weather changed to chilly, we set off with Purple Emperor. Mostly just more treelined river, a few lovely properties to look at, a cow waded in for a drink. Passed some old blokes on a rowing challenge from Lechlade to London. Moored up in Abingdon. We were disappointed in the place I would call it sad. Filled up with water, did Elson ready for Oxford tomorrow.

Day 42, Friday 16 May 2025

Abingdon Lock to Osney Railway Bridge – 8.25 miles, 3 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

Back to hot weather so on with the shorts and an easy cruise of 8 miles into Oxford. Well not that easy because at Iffley Lock we got into the lock but could not get out. Ally was operating the controls and nothing worked. Brian had a go and still nothing worked, so he rang for help. After about 40 minutes a lady lockkeeper turned up on a bike and reset the lock from her office. So, off we went again. Bit iffy, this Iffley lock!



Day 42, Friday 16 May 2025

**Abingdon Lock to Osney Railway Bridge – 8.25 miles, 3 Locks, 0 MB,
0 Aqueducts**



Taking in the sights in Oxford

Day 42, Friday 16 May 2025

**Abingdon Lock to Osney Railway Bridge – 8.25 miles, 3 Locks, 0 MB,
0 Aqueducts**



Mooring up in Oxford, after taking Hugo for a walk in some very pleasant nature reserve, we got ready and walked about 15 minutes into town. Did some sightseeing and had a Pimm's and lemonade outside in the sunshine. Then to an Indian restaurant called Dishoom where we met up with Ian and Ally. Will and Amber had given Brian some vouchers towards a meal here and we all enjoyed the unique atmosphere and home cooked Indian dishes. Apart from me ordering a beer in a can that when it arrived, we realised it had been brewed by prisoners! Dare I drink it? Would they have spat in it or worse ?!

Day 43, Saturday 17 May 2025

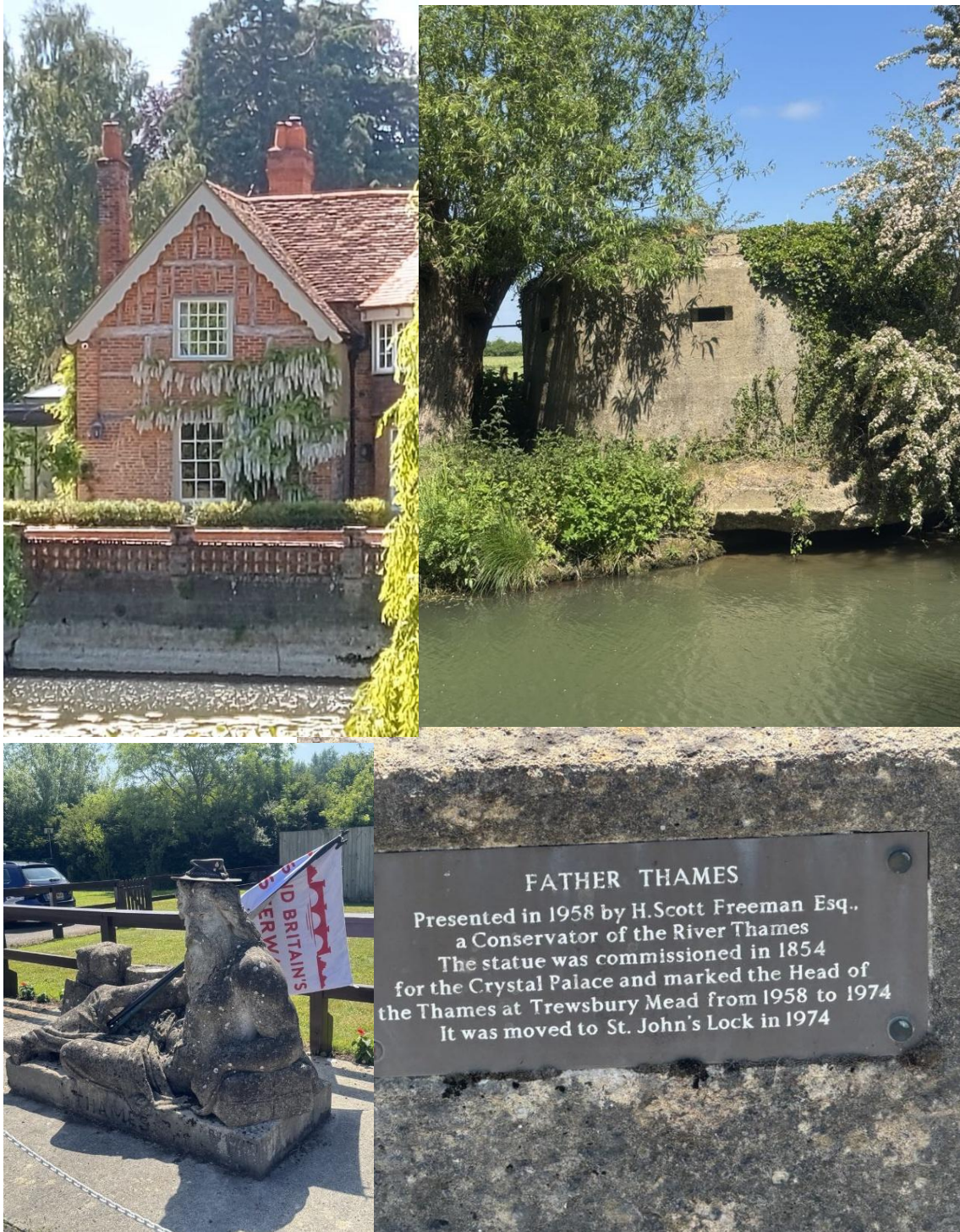
Osney Railway Bridge to Tadpole Bridge – 19.94 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Today was a long cruising day from 8:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. The Thames got narrower as the day went on, the countryside more open, with very few boats or people about. Some of the locks were manned and others were not. Ally and I built up some muscles working one of the locks that was operated by hand. Turning a wheel that seemed like hundreds of times to work the gates and sluices. In the afternoon the sun came out and we cruised along, like 'Ratty and Mole' from 'Wind in the Willows'. Moored up in Tadpole on a very precarious mooring outside the pub.

Day 44, Sunday 18 May 2025

Tadpole Bridge to Lechlade – 11.38 miles, 5 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Setting off from the dodgy mooring outside the pub in Tadpole, we were determined to get to the head of the navigable River Thames. The river meandered in loops, often we could see Purple Emperor parallel to us, even though we were ahead of them. The locks and lock keepers' cottages are very well maintained here and a pleasure to see.

Day 44, Sunday 18 May 2025

Tadpole Bridge to Lechlade – 11.38 miles, 5 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

We arrived in Lechlade in the early afternoon and carried on up the river to the head of the navigable Thames at a place called the 'Roundhouse'. On the way a woman and her two dogs on the towpath were being hassled by a herd of cows. Brian realised the woman was having difficulty getting passed the cows with her dogs and shouted out to her. 'I am about to turn around would you like a lift passed the cows with your dogs'. She accepted the offer, but first Bri had to get his picture for his Silver Propeller first. On the footbridge in front of us there was a big sign; No turning after this point – shallow water. So what does Bri do? what Bri always does and took no notice; he was going to get the shot of the boat and the roundhouse. Needless to say, Bri got his photo and managed eventually to get the boat turned around after several small groundings.

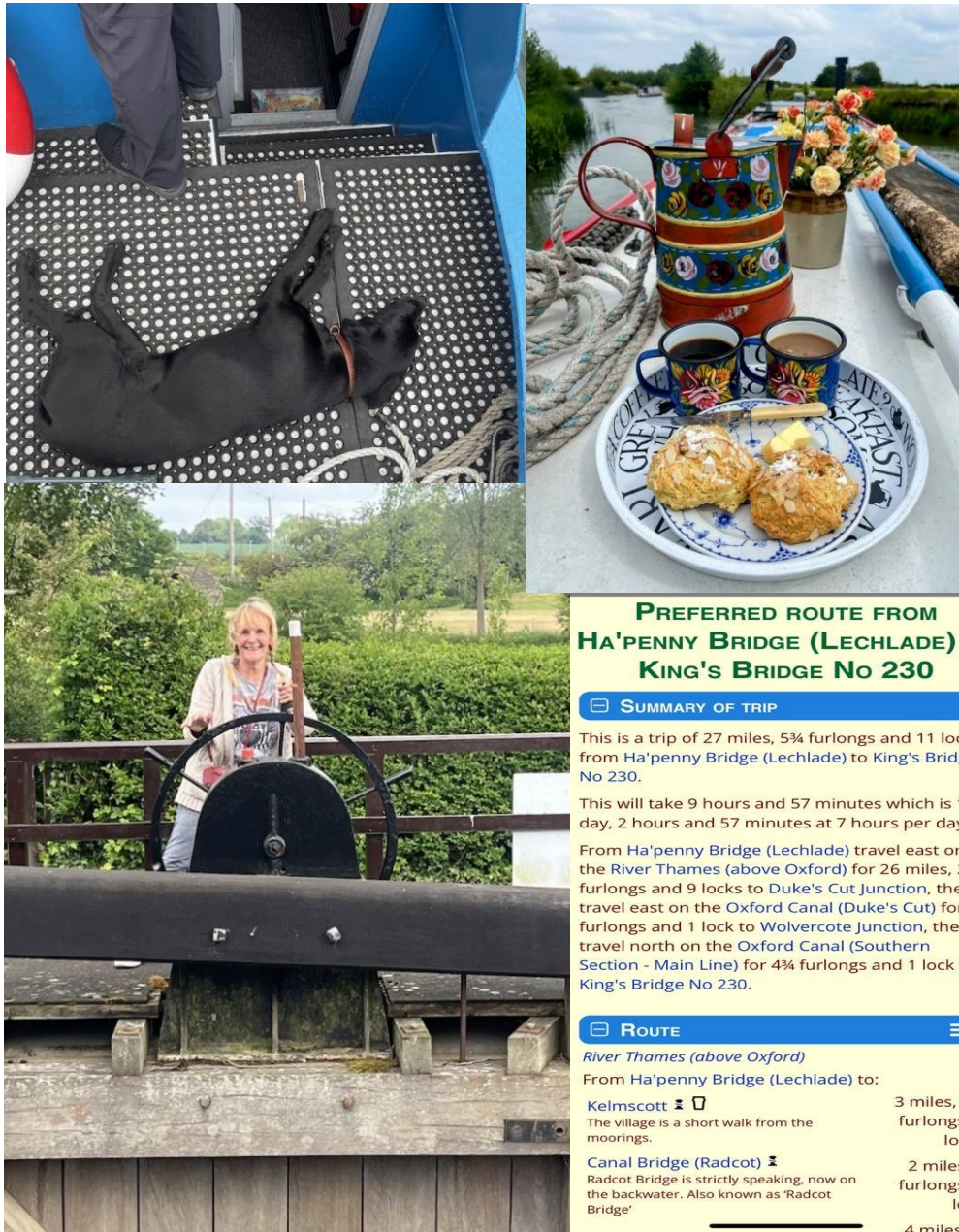


Now to pick up the woman and her dogs, Bri slowly reversed the boat as close as he could to the riverbank then laid a plank across from the boat to the bank, he got off with a rope and proceeded to pull the boat as close to the riverbank as he could. Very precariously the women came across bringing one frightened dog at a time. I held the first dog whilst she went back and got the second. Bri then tried to get moving again but we were grounded so out came the bargepole and with a bit of engine revving and pole pushing we got free. Took the woman and her dogs passed the cows and pulled up outside the Riverside pub so she could disembark.

There is never a dull moment in this boating malarky.

Day 45, Monday 19 May 2025

Lechlade to Kings Bridge – 27.72 miles, 11 Locks, 1 MB, 0 Aqueducts



It was going to be a very long cruising day and with a disappointment that Kelmscott Manor was closed and we would be passing right by it, Ally made cherry and almond scones in compensation. Hugo was riding on the stern and got chilled out even having asleep on the deck.

Ally has loved the locks on the upper Thames, their pirates ship like wheels to move the sluices. I have loved the lock keepers' cottages and beautiful kept gardens. At the junction with the South Oxford canal, we turned off the Thames through Duke's cut where there was a hippie commune and back onto the canal system proper with windlass in hand.

Day 46, Tuesday 20 May 2025

Kings Bridge to Thrupp Canal Cruising Club – 3.63 miles, 2 Locks, 1 MB, 0 Aqueducts

Nothing much to write home about today. We set off at 7 a.m. in order to get to Thrupp in time for Bri to go back and get the car. Arrived at Thrupp at 8:20 a.m. that must be the shortest cruising day ever. Checked out what was at Thrupp before Bri got a bus into Oxford for the 11:12 train to York.

I spent the day packing up and cleaning the boat, before walking to the café by the side of the Canal for lunch.

Bri returned from York with the car at 6:45 p.m. had tea then loaded the car ready to go home in the morning. So that is me signing out of part two of this years adventure. All will start again in about 10 days' time when we will be on Day 47 and the start of our journey to Boston for the trip across the Wash sometime late June.

Day 47, Friday 30 May 2025

Thrupp Canal Cruising Club to Thrupp Canal Cruising Club



We arrived back at the boat with all our clean washing and collected a Tesco delivery from Anne's café at Thrupp. Brian had taken the car back to York and I was left to lug a weeks' worth of shopping from the Tesco van halfway down the canal to THATSIT. The Tesco delivery driver thought this was hilarious and took a photo on my phone too 'taunt' my husband with! Stayed on board alone (with Hugo) for the night but Thrupp seemed like a safe place, so I wasn't worried to do so.

Day 48, Saturday 31 May 2025

Thrupp Canal CC to Somerton Mill Bridge – 10.03 miles, 7 Locks, 2 MB, 0 Aqueducts

The boat had been moored under a tree for 10 days and the state it was in when we returned, it looked like it hadn't been moved for months. First job today clean the outside of THATSIT, sweeping and scrubbing the roof and sweeping the stern deck.



Evidently the canal flooded and when it down left this boat behind!

Day 48, Saturday 31 May 2025

**Thrupp Canal CC to Somerton Mill Bridge – 10.03 miles, 7 Locks, 2 MB,
0 Aqueducts**



Brian returned from York and when we were all shipshape, we set off at about 11:30 a.m. 10 miles and seven narrow locks to a quiet mooring just above Upper Hayford. The Oxford canal is very rural, I did get a bit of a chance to sit in the bow on the new cushions and admire the scenery, that's when I wasn't called to work a lock or swing bridge that is.

Day 49, Sunday 1 Jun 2025

**Somerton Mill Bridge to Cropredy Wharf – 14.78 miles, 9 Locks, 2 MB,
1 Aqueducts**



Eating my breakfast in the bow one of my favourite boat things to do.

On our way to Banbury, moored up, had a not very nice Sunday dinner in The Reindeer pub. Saw the fine lady on a cock horse and the Banbury cross.

Checked out Tooley's boatyard but it was closed! Decided to move on to Cropredy for a more pleasant mooring. Lovley evening cruise apart from the RAT that jumped out at me when I was walking Hugo on the towpath.

Day 50, Monday 2 Jun 2025

Cropredy to Fenny Compton Marina – 5.94 miles, 9 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Today we had a look around Cropredy. A lovely little village with thatched cottages and a church whose bells rung every 15 minutes. We had a coffee and breakfast in a nice little cafe and then set off to Fenny Compton.

Day 50, Monday 2 Jun 2025

Croprey to Fenny Compton Marina – 5.94 miles, 9 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



There had been water issues on the lock flight ahead and CRT we're flushing some water down, so for the first time we had to queue to use the locks. Before we set off today, I had seen who I thought was Helen Weatherly from school days on a boat Nellie Jean. I approached her and it was indeed Helen. We arranged to meet later for a catch up which we did in the Pub at Fenny Compton.

Day 51, Tuesday 3 Jun 2025

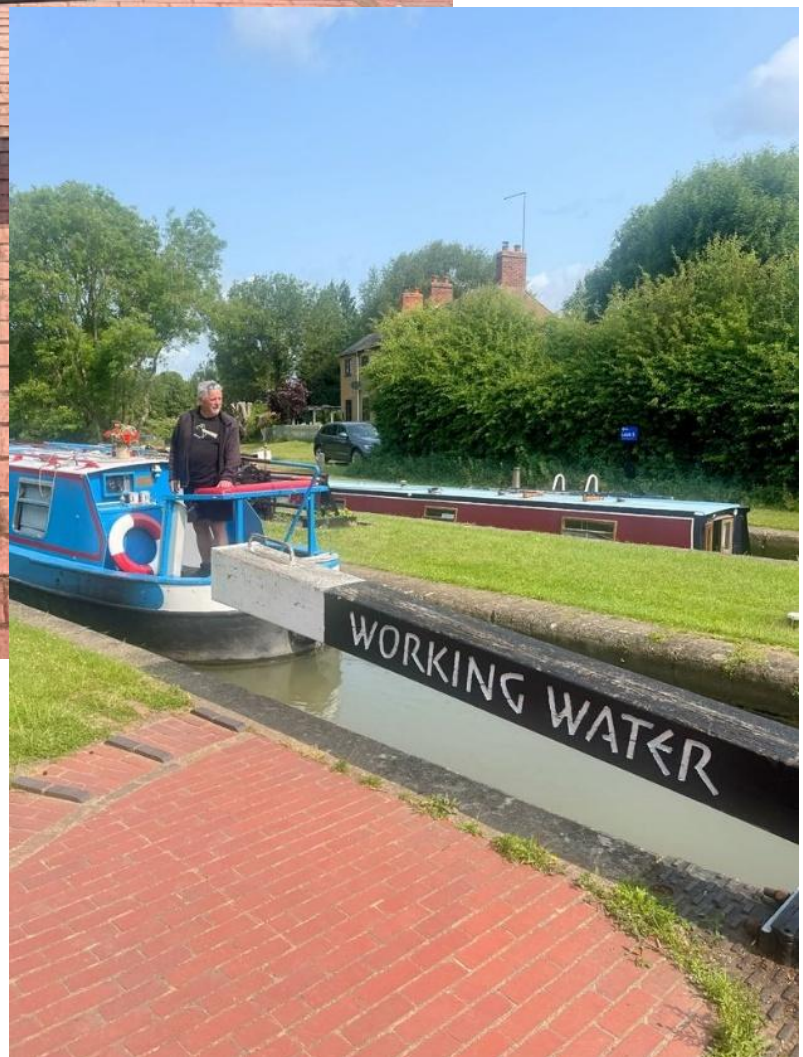
Compton Marina to Brauston Chandlers – 16.84 miles, 9 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



This morning for the first time in 51 days travelling on the boat we wore our waterproofs. The first two hours were lock free, passing by what will become HS2. Then a lock flight of 9 and on to Napton Junction where we walked Hugo to the local cafe and bought cake. Mooring this evening in Branston and looking forward to the beef casserole 'B' has rustled up.

Day 52, Wednesday 4 Jun 2025

Brauston to Hawkesbury Junction – 23.53 miles, 4 Locks, 0 MB, 10 Aqueducts



Today was an early start with no locks for a couple of hours so I had a lazy morning. A few easy locks at Hillmorton Locks the busiest locks in the country

Day 52, Wednesday 4 Jun 2025

Brauston to Hawkesbury Junction – 23.53 miles, 4 Locks, 0 MB, 10 Aqueducts



Followed by a long cruise to Hawksbury Junction where we met Anne and Brian Clark. Sat outside at the Greyhound pub with them while we waited for Purple Emperor to arrive. It was a lot cooler this evening so glad to be back warm and cosy on THATSIT.

Day 53, Thursday 5 Jun 2025

Hawkesbury junction to Coventry Basin & Back-11 miles, 0Locks, 0MB, 0Aqueducts



A rainy trip into Coventry basin. 'B' wanted to collect another silver propeller, so we chugged up to the head of the canal a journey of 2 1/2 hours some of it in the rain.

Most annoyingly we had to stop twice to detangle stuff from around the prop. The first stop took ages, a load of rope and wire which had dragged an unidentified object which became tightly wrapped around the propeller. It was a long job using knives and wire cutters.

As we entered the Coventry basin THATSIT came to a halt a second time, this time a shredded carpet was removed. Despite its size this obstruction was quicker to get rid of.



Day 53, Thursday 5 Jun 2025

Hawkesbury junction to Coventry Basin & Back–11 miles, 0Locks, 0MB, 0Aqueducts



Had the obligatory photo for the silver propeller, Brian on boat in front of a statue of James Brindley. Then back we went to Hawksbury junction, away from the city and all the nasties that come with it!!

Day 54, Friday 6 Jun 2025

Hawkesbury to Atherstone Top Lock – 10.88 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

Another wet start to the day but there were no locks. A rather boring damp cruise of around four hours to Atherstone where we moored up behind Purple Emperor. Helped Ally out by walking Jensen since she has a chest infection and Ian has gone home for the day to see his parents. The day was so dull I failed to take any photographs whatsoever.

Day 55, Saturday 7 Jun 2025

Atherstone Top Lock to Alvecote Bridge – 7.16 miles, 11 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

We had a later start having been to Atherstone's Tesco and set off around 11:30 AM. Firstly there was a lock flight of 11 locks. Five had volunteer lock keepers to help. I was going between Thatsit and Purple Emperor as Ally was too poorly with a chest infection to work the gates and paddles. Moored up just before Tamworth, spagbol for tea tonight. Another day without any new photos to post.

Day 56, Sunday 8 Jun 2025

Alvecote Bridge to Fradley Junction – 14.94 miles, 2 Locks, 1 MB, 3 Aqueducts



Another rainy and a bit chilly day. We only had two locks to do Ally decided she was fit enough to help out and between the two of us and other boats coming up and down we were soon through. Although we had a family of goslings riding down with us in the second lock. We stopped off on route at Lichfield Cruising Club where we had a drink in the bar and had a tour around by one of the members. The clubhouse is in a double canal cottage. All very quirky and old fashioned not a bit like SIBC. Posed for a photo with FBW flags there and then on to Fradley Junction where we moored up and had dinner in the 'Mucky Duck'.

Day 57, Monday 9 Jun 2025

Fradley Junction to Willington – 14.44 miles, 11 Locks, 0 MB, 8 Aqueducts



Fradley Junction

Day 57, Monday 9 Jun 2025

Fradley Junction to Willington – 14.44 miles, 11 Locks, 0 MB, 8 Aqueducts



We filled up with water and did the Elson before setting off from Fradley Junction. Heading to Willington via 'Birds bakery' at Branston, where we were treated to 'Elephants Feet' by Ian and Ally. 11 locks, today some of which were hard to work. Mooring in Willington and Ian had arranged to meet Bev and Peter from SIBC since they live here. We sat on the towpath for drinks but the weather was cold and then a bit rainy, so we didn't stop long!

Day 58, Tuesday 10 Jun 2025

Willington to Trent Lock – 14.28 miles, 8 Locks, 0 MB, 3 Aqueducts



Waking up this morning with really bad hay fever! From now on we would be working heavy double locks. Managed to get into a system with Ally driving Purple Emperor and mostly Ian and I working the lock gates. Met up on the towpath with Ann and Simon Michie and Malc and Ange who were heading in the opposite direction and had coffee. Mooring this evening on the pontoon at Trent lock, the sun came out and we were really quite warm.

Day 59, Wednesday 11 Jun 2025

Trent Lock to Gunthorpe – 20.84 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



The sun was shining as we set off this morning and headed to Beeston to the Boat Club Café for a proper breakfast. By the time we arrived it had turned into brunch, and we sat outside on the riverbank as though



Day 59, Wednesday 11 Jun 2025

Trent Lock to Gunthorpe – 20.84 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

A few manual locks to get us through Nottingham with a quick stop over at Sainsbury's Beeston to top up on supplies. Aiming for Gunthorpe tonight, where the 'boys' had arranged to meet Dean Hyde for a catch up. Today was also the day that I got injured twice! Once, operating Cranfield lock, when the attached winding handle spun round and caught me on the wrist, then again when Hugo pulled me over when he set off at full speed after Jensons' ball whilst I had him on the extendable lead!

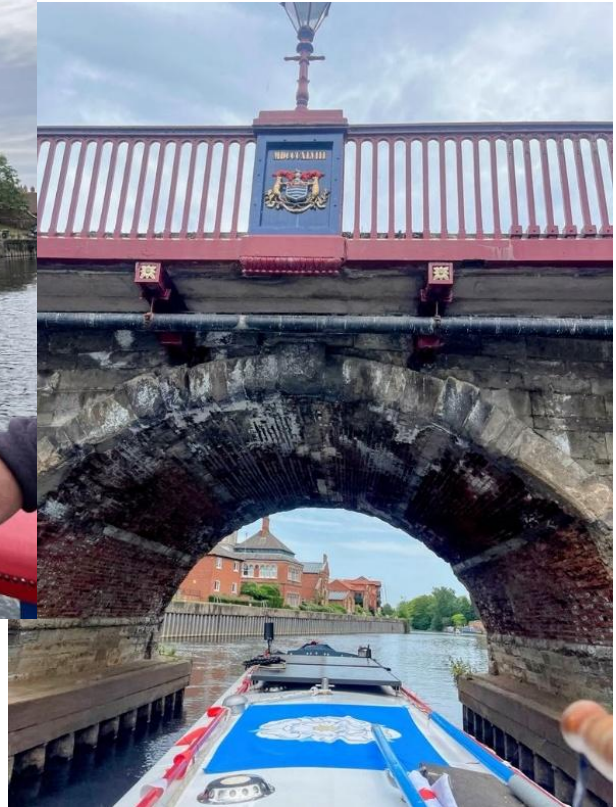


Day 60, Thursday 12 Jun 2025

Gunthorpe to Newark Marina – 13.81 miles, 3 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Today would be a short cruising day, setting off from Gunthorpe at 9:00 AM, to arrive in Newark early afternoon.



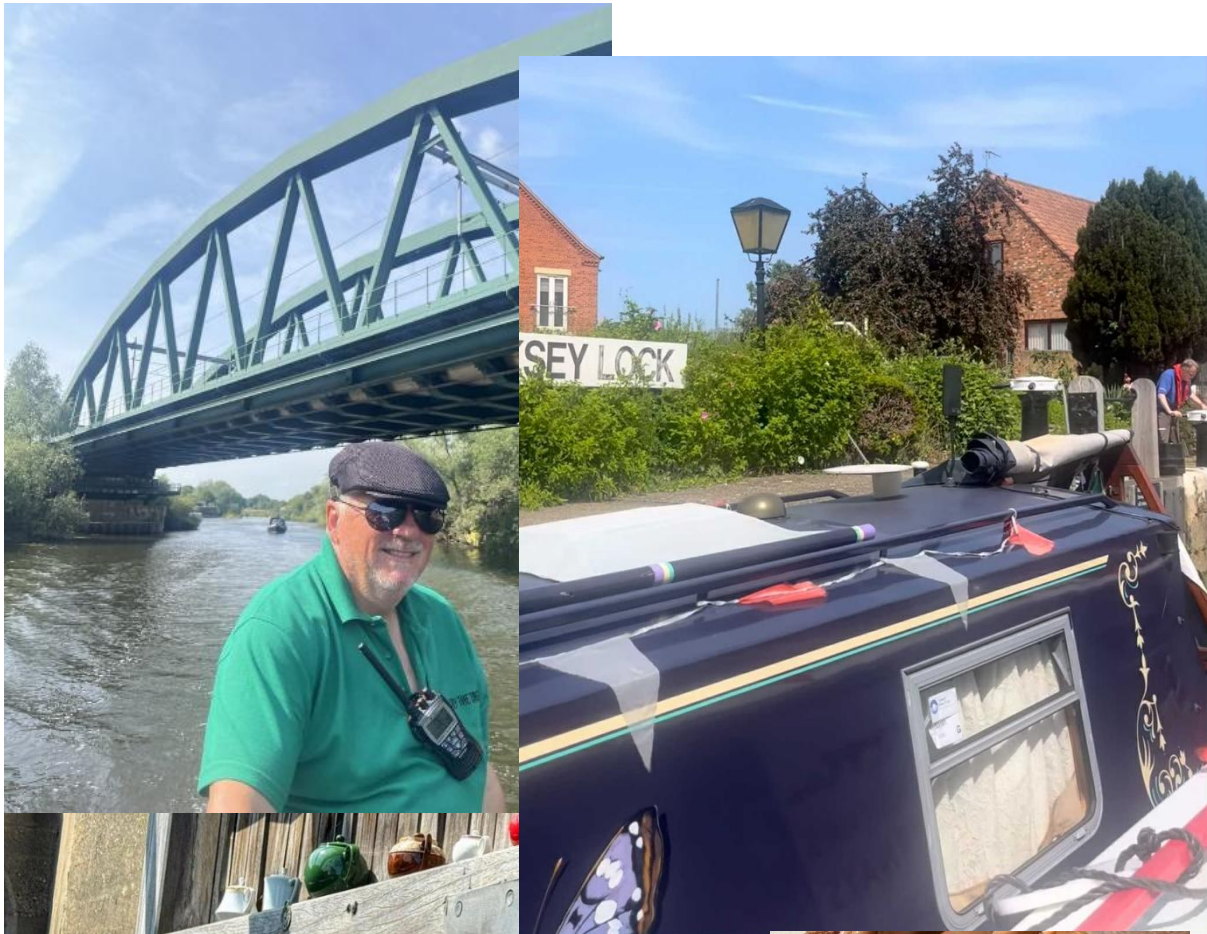
We picked up another boat, which had been on the Westminster jolly, 'Paradigm Shift', they didn't like dogs, so we were not surprised when they didn't want to moor with us in Newark and stayed at Farndon Marina instead.



When we got to Newark the pontoon was full, and the other moorings are not suitable for doggies to get on and off. We decided to go onto Kings Marina where we have stayed previously although it costs £17.00 a night. I was happy to use their laundry to get all of the smelly socks, towels etc freshened up since we will be on board for another three weeks I reckon.

Day 61, Friday 13 Jun 2025

Newark Marina to Saxilby– 26.41 miles, 3 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Headed off to Cromwell where the lock keeper saw us through with Purple Emperor and another unknown boat. The weather was sunny, and very hot, sunscreen was definitely needed. 3 hours to Torksey and Ally had baked a chocolate Malteser cake on route, yummy. Once through Torksey lock we were on unknown territory and followed the Roman engineered canal in a very straight, if not boring line to Saxilby where we moored up for the night.

Day 62, Saturday 14 Jun 2025

Saxilby to Lincoln – 6.03 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



We set off towards Lincoln stopping to get diesel and a refill for the gas cylinder on the way. We then met with the rest of the party, Richard and Hazel, Mick, David and Claudia at the Pyewipe inn on the Fosdyke canal.



A quick coffee and then on to Lincoln in the hope of finding a mooring there. Under the famous 'glory hole' which dates back to 1160 and has houses built on top.



We were then right in the centre of Lincoln City on a couple of vacant if not odd moorings just before the empowerment sculpture.

Day 62, Saturday 14 Jun 2025

Saxilby to Lincoln – 6.03 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Lincoln – Empowerment Sculpture

Day 63, Sunday 15 Jun 2025

Lincoln – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Another warm and sunny day. After Hugo's morning walk, we went off into Lincoln City centre to do a spot of sightseeing. Up the very steep hill to the cathedral and castle. But first, a coffee at Stokes tea and coffee shop which is an old family run tea shop housed in the building over the 'glory hole'.



Day 63, Sunday 15 Jun 2025

Lincoln – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



After a pleasant morning, Sunday lunch was in the pub Royal William IV with Ally and Ian and Mick. All the men came away with goody bags for Father's Day.

When we got back to the boat, we saw that Tonka II had moored behind us with David and Claudia on board.



Day 64, Monday 16 Jun 2025

Lincoln to Bardney Lock – 8.72 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



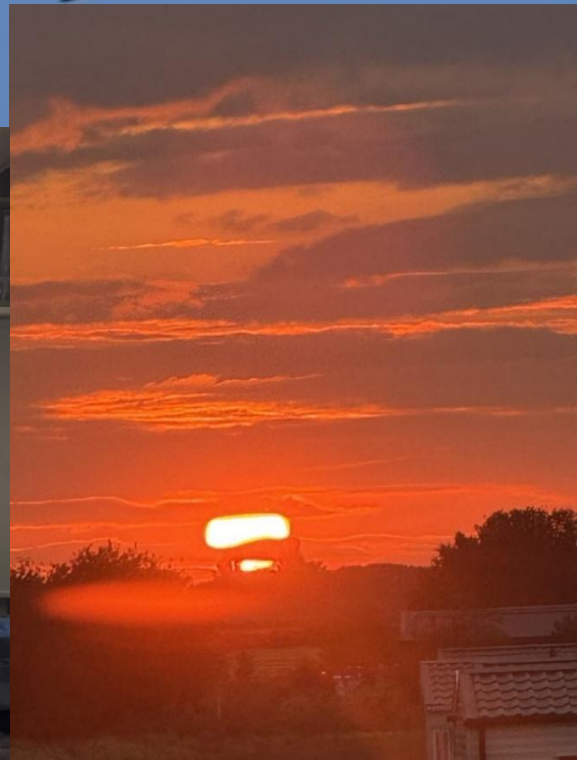
We left our mooring in Lincoln after a bit of shopping first then stopped at the first lock to fill with water. Stamp End lock is unusual as it is a guillotine lock. No paddles on one end with just a massive steel gate that lifts when operated electronically by pushing a button. The other end is just like a normal lock with a manual

windlass at the far end and two gates to open.

Now we were on the river Witham. Very straight with no scenery as such as it is open Fenland, the riverbanks are high. Although we did come across some interesting sculptures in the middle of nowhere! We found a quiet mooring space for two boats on a pontoon just before the next lock and decided to stay for the night the heat making us feel a little lazy.

Day 65, Tuesday 17 Jun 2025

Bardney Lock to Dogdyke – 12.34 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



The river Witham is straight with no views, even I had a go on the tiller for a bit. Very few moving boats with the peace only interrupted now and again by fighter jets overhead from RAF Conningsborough. moored up on the pontoon at

dogdyke had lunch/dinner, later sat on the pontoon and played Yahtzee with Ian and Ally. Jensen called round for Hugo, cute. An amazing sunset tonight.

Day 66, Wednesday 18 Jun 2025

Dogdyke to South Kyme via Cobblers lock – 9.38 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

Today was shit!!



The weather was hot, and the 'boys' (Brian and Ian on Purple Emperor) had decided to do one of their Silver Propeller Challenges. The river Slea. or known locally as Kyme Eau. Brian said that the Canal Planner app indicated that it would take just 5 1/2 hours there and back and that we should set off early to avoid the heat. So off we went at 8:00 AM. I

was still in my pyjamas enjoying my breakfast in the bow when I discovered that we had arrived at a lock that needed doing.

Day 66, Wednesday 18 Jun 2025

Dogdyke to South Kyme via Cobblers lock – 9.38 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

Today was shit!!



There was thick, green, slimy, smelly weed round the lock which had a pungent stink to it. Brian got out to open the gates which looked as though they hadn't been opened in ages. At the other end of the lock there was a guillotine gate which had to be manually wound. Purple Emperor had entered the lock, and I realised Ally had not got out! I would have to work the lock myself. So, in my flip flops and PJ'S I slowly closed the gates and started to wind the guillotine up. It took ages, my sweatshirt had to come off, I had no bra on, it was hard work! Eventually the gate was up, then, Ally came out to help wind down the guillotine gate

Day 66, Wednesday 18 Jun 2025

Dogdyke to South Kyme via Cobblers lock – 9.38 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0

Aqueducts

Today was shit!!



The weed was like a carpet of green, smelly slime; did we really have to go on this crazy mission? There were no views, nowhere to moor, the sun was intense, and the weed got rapped around the propeller which meant B had to go into the weed hatch time and time again.

As we approached the village of South Kyme there were more challenges. A lot of overhanging branches and it was shallow and at some points very narrow. We grounded outside a property which had a stone terrace. B told me to get off to lessen the load on the stern deck. The homeowner came out and shouted, 'that's private property you know.'

Lunch time came and went, the skipper was not stopping, he wanted a challenge, so I give him one. I handed him a plate of spaghetti with tomato sauce. 'eat that', I said, you wanted a challenge, don't get it on your top!

Day 66, Wednesday 18 Jun 2025

Dogdyke to South Kyme via Cobblers lock – 9.38 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

Today was shit!!

After 7 miles of thick weed and then becoming stuck one more time, the skippers decided to give up, half a mile from the end. The simple truth was that the bottom was too near the top, we could go no further. Trouble was there was nowhere to wind. So we had to set off reversing!! we went for a couple of hours at least. B drank five pints of water as he wrestled with a barge pole to keep us out of the bulrushes. Eventually we reached a winding hole, and we could turn around.



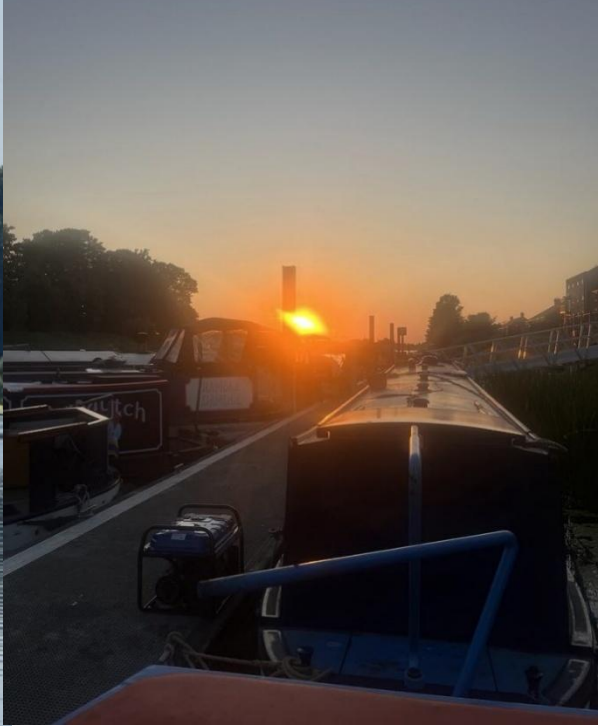
The going was a little easier when going forward! When we got back to South Kyme we all agreed enough was enough and we moored up for the night. Needless to say, we ladies were a little perplexed with the situation! tomorrow is another day!



Footnote from the Skipper. It wasn't that bad, a little challenging agreed, but it wouldn't be worthy of a Silver Propeller if everyone went there. The challenge recognises that the last mile and a half could be subject to grounding at time of low water. As we have just had the driest spring on record it was that. So we did not fail in our task and the Silver Propeller is in the bag.

Day 67, Thursday 19 Jun 2025

South Kyme to Boston visitors' moorings – 13.38 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



We cruised to Boston today, in very hot weather, then moored up with the other boats. Waiting now for the instructions tomorrow, to see if the wash crossing is doable. I think it could be a long few days....

Day 68, Friday 20 Jun 2025

Boston – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



It was boiling hot. Nothing to do but get the supplies in from Asda. Sat out in the evening with Donna and Mick, Ellen and Duncan while Ian attempted to fit a new fridge into his boat, since the last one was kaputt. Went to a safety briefing at the Boston lock cafe to get the lowdown on the Wash crossing. It's all seemed absolutely terrifying. We had a meal at the cafe with all the other crews, the temperature was stifling.

Day 69, Saturday 21 Jun 2025

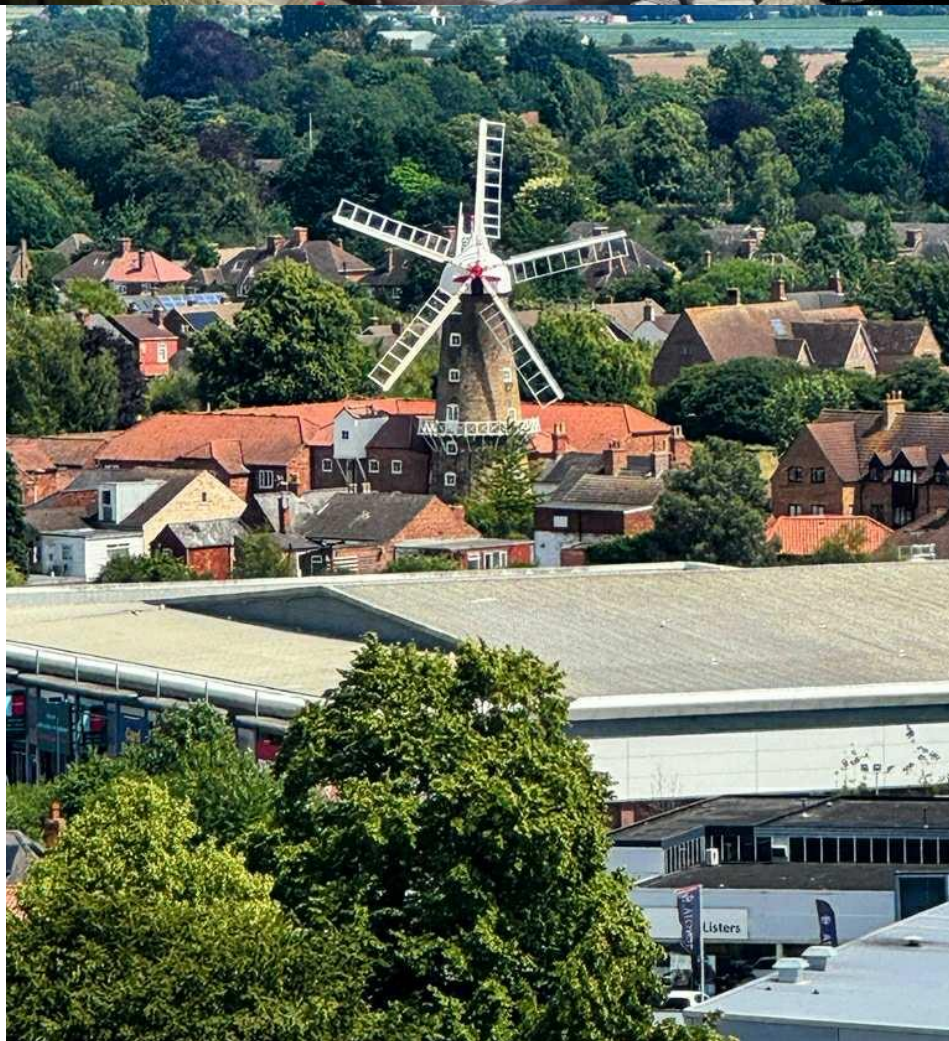
Boston to Hubberts Bridge (Black Sluice Navigation) – 3.75 miles, 2 Locks, 0MB, 0Aqueducts



Hottest day of the year reading 33° in the afternoon. In the morning some of us trooped off into Boston to St Botolphs church, a huge parish church, the biggest in England, with not a spire or a tower but a stump where it is thought a light shone to guide ships.

Day 69, Saturday 21 Jun 2025

Boston to Hubberts Bridge (Black Sluice Navigation) – 3.75 miles, 2 Locks, 0MB, 0Aqueducts



Day 69, Saturday 21 Jun 2025

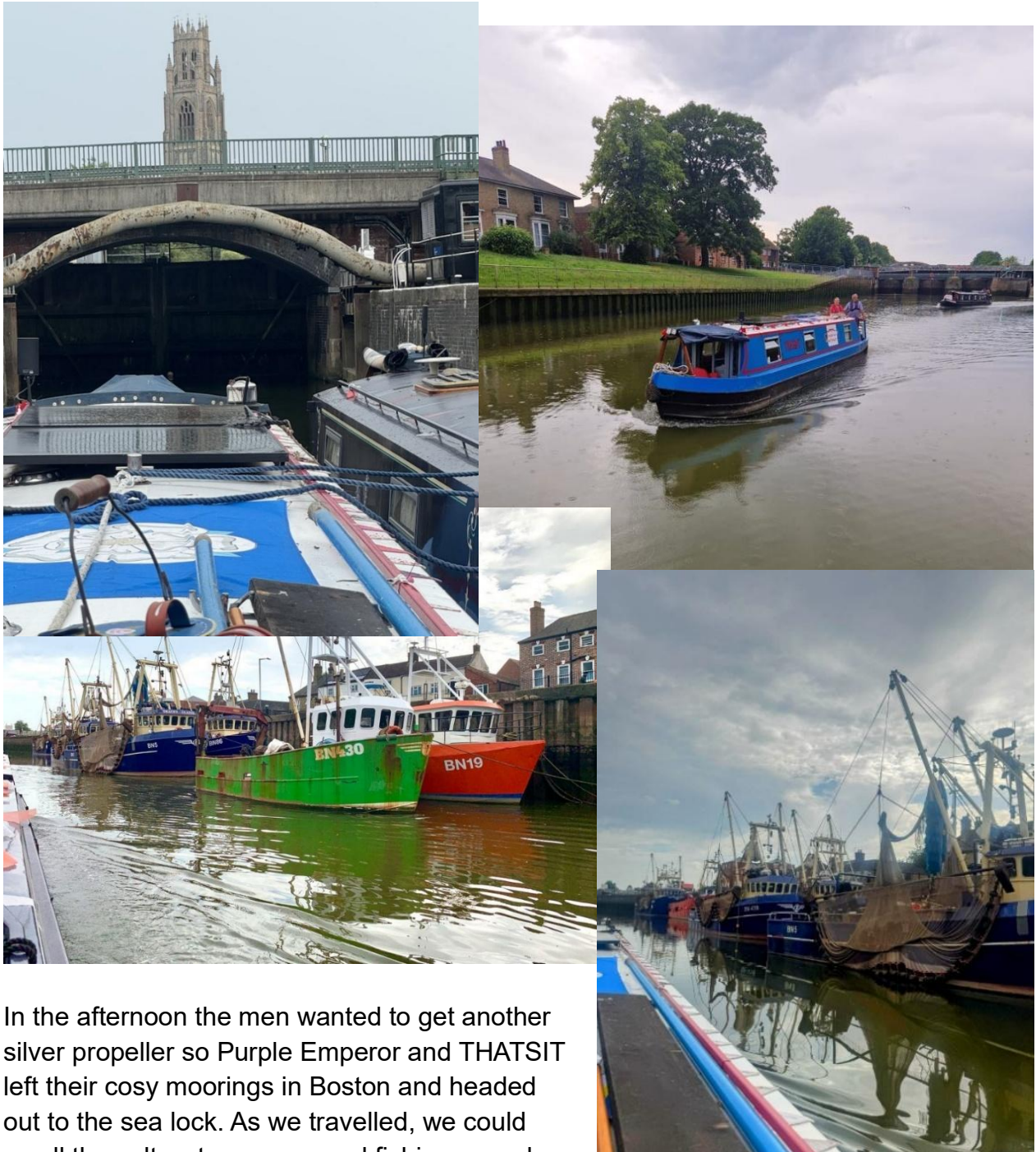
Boston to Hubberts Bridge (Black Sluice Navigation) – 3.75 miles, 2 Locks, 0MB, 0Aqueducts



The ladies looked around the craft fair that was in the church and Brian Ian and Duncan took it upon themselves to climb the 365 steps up the claustrophobic, narrow, spiral staircase to a viewing balcony where they took a panoramic photo.

Day 69, Saturday 21 Jun 2025

Boston to Hubberts Bridge (Black Sluice Navigation) – 3.75 miles, 2 Locks, 0MB, 0Aqueducts



In the afternoon the men wanted to get another silver propeller so Purple Emperor and THATSIT left their cosy moorings in Boston and headed out to the sea lock. As we travelled, we could smell the salt water, we passed fishing vessels moored up. We panned out of the grand sluice lock and then into the black sluice lock which is operated by the Environment Agency. We were then on the non-tidal black sluice navigation. The water was a green carpet of weed, wall to wall, pea soup, fortunately no weed got rapped around the propeller. After about an hour we arrived at a pontoon, which has a pub next to it, nothing else, except a pump out and an Elson point, just plain weird.

Day 69, Saturday 21 Jun 2025

Boston to Hubberts Bridge (Black Sluice Navigation) – 3.75 miles, 2 Locks, 0MB, 0Aqueducts



We joked about spending the night on a drain hence the photos of the stink



There is also one of Brian looking happy because he's got his next silver propeller.

Day 70, Sunday 22 Jun 2025

Hubberts Bridge (Black Sluice Navigation) to Boston – 3.75 miles, 2 Locks, 0MB, 0Aqueducts



The day did not start well. One of the key reasons for coming here, apart from the Silver Propeller, was so that Ian could have a pump out. When the door fell off, as he opened it, it gave an indication that things were not quite right. Then he found no nozzle on the end of the pump out tube. There was going to be no pump out for Ian today.

As we stood talking about why there would have been a pump out point in the middle of nowhere, we hear a great big splash. Hugo had fallen off, or, he had thought, all that weed was a nice bit of grass to play on. Whatever it was, Hugo had his first swimming lesson. It took both Bri and Ian to pull him out, but not before first finding a way to get Jensons harness on him whilst he was still swimming. Safley out of the water Hugo proceeds to thank his two rescuers by shaking all over them, Lesson learnt, buy Hugo another harness, (number 3) different type this time, one hopefully he cannot get at to chew.



Day 70, Sunday 22 Jun 2025

Hubberts Bridge (Black Sluice Navigation) to Boston – 3.75 miles, 2 Locks, 0MB, 0Aqueducts



The second incident of the day was locking out. We had arrived at Black Sluice Lock in plenty of time to get to the Grand Sluice before the tide got too high for us to get in. There was a total lack of

communication between the CRT and EA lockkeepers to the extent that we got a telephone call from CRT saying where are you. The lock is open and ready for you; we were not even in the EA lock, never mind on our way. Full steam ahead through the lock, both boats on full power, we managed to beat the tide with no time to spare, the top gates of the lock were opening as the bottom gates were still closing, the waters were level. Another minute and the CRT lock keeper said he would have had to close the bottom gate, and we would have had to wait a further 3 ½ hours before the lock could be opened again.

Excitement over for the day, we got back to Boston visitors mooring and went and had a very enjoyable Sunday Lunch.



Day 71, Monday 23 Jun 2025

Boston – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



An exciting day today! went shopping to Asda, got a new dog harness for Hugo. I then tried out the laundrette. then it got better, we hosted tea and cake on the pontoon for Ian's birthday. In the evening, we all went for a meal at the pub. Later in bed I felt poorly and spent some time on the toilet with S&D, yuck, no photos of that one of course.

Day 72, Tuesday 24 Jun 2025

Boston – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Today was the day of preparation, the boat crossing of the Wash will take place tomorrow, all things being well. We had a walk to Mauds windmill and then lunch in the town centre. Hugo was a good boy, and is getting much better on the lead, and at sitting quietly at the cafe under the table.

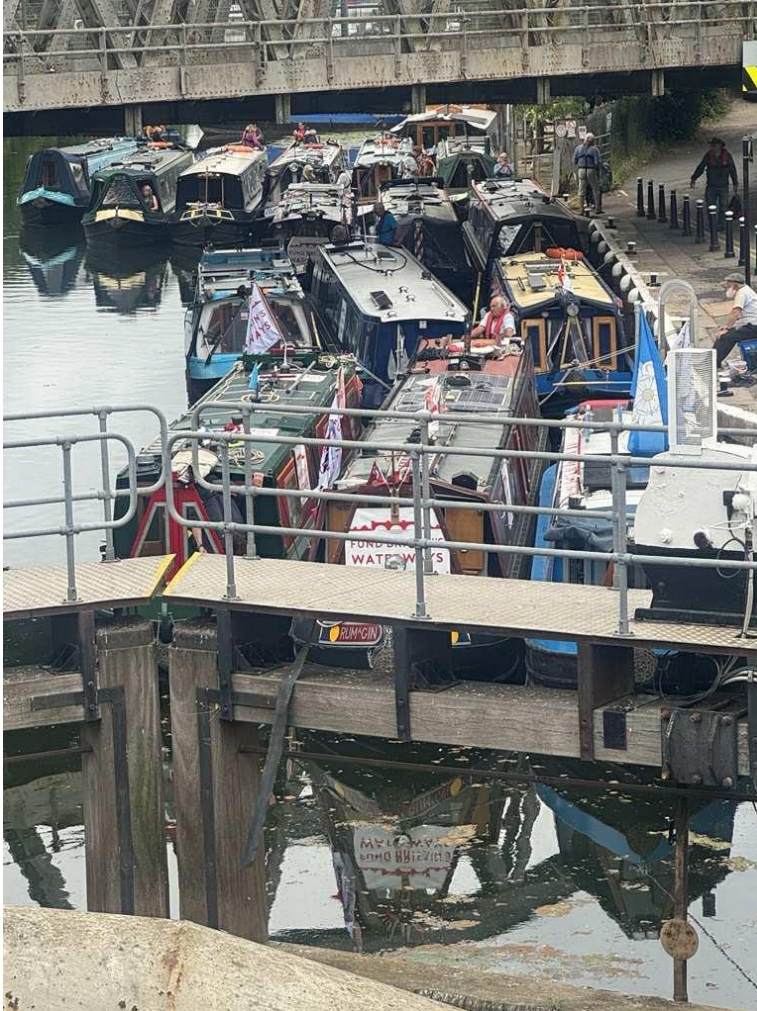


Another meeting took place in the evening, at the pub complete with a quiz, which was supposed to throw light on the complexities of the sea crossing! Donna says she is full of dread, most of us ladies are admitting to nerves (the blokes are gung-ho). Fingers crossed for a successful day tomorrow, and that all the intrepid mariners, arrive on dry land safe and sound.

Day 73, Wednesday 25 Jun 2025

Boston to Wisbech Yacht Club– 44 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

THE WASH.



By 6:00 AM we had the Go/No Call and it was GO!! The boats started to move to their formation position at Boston lock. We were boat number 3 behind Andrew and Hazel, on Doris Katja and Rum 'a' Gin respectively.

Even Hugo had his life jacket on ready for the off. Mind you I don't think he likes it very much!



Day 73, Wednesday 25 Jun 2025

Boston to Wisbech Yacht Club– 44 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

THE WASH.



We waited for a long time at the lock, for the high spring tide to drop and equalise levels, so that the lock gates could be opened. When the lock keeper opened the front lock gates, our adventurous day at sea had begun.



Today was the only day in a window of five days that the tides and the wind were favourable, so today really was the day. It took over an hour to get right out onto the wash. The waves gently lapping on our bow, as we filed out in order, like a snake of narrowboats across the water, all line astern. My biggest fear was that I would be seasick for the full 10 hours or so it would take to get to Wisbech, but I had my tablets, and all was well.

Day 73, Wednesday 25 Jun 2025

Boston to Wisbech Yacht Club– 44 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

THE WASH.



All at Sea

Day 73, Wednesday 25 Jun 2025

Boston to Wisbech Yacht Club– 44 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

THE WASH.



After about 4 1/2 hours the fun really began, we took ‘the ground’ on a sandbank. Approaching the beach, we spotted about a dozen seals along the shoreline, when they became aware of us, they all dived into the sea and swam off. Darryl our pilots had told us to ‘give it some welly’ as we beached the boats, Brian increased the power, but Darryl waved us to slow down. All was well though, we had landed, next was the logistics of getting off the bow on to the sand.

Brian dropped down from the bow, the water came up to his knees. Next was Hugo, we manhandled him with his life jacket on. Brian then took the anchor and pulled the chain right out straight onto the sand. Hugo went madly running in and out of the waves with the other dogs he was in his elements.

I waited until Van got his ladder to help me down. I really did not fancy jumping and hurting my knees. Once on the sandbank we all marvelled at ourselves, took photos, the drones were up and the dogs were having the time of their lives.

Day 73, Wednesday 25 Jun 2025

Boston to Wisbech Yacht Club– 44 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

THE WASH.



Day 73, Wednesday 25 Jun 2025

Boston to Wisbech Yacht Club– 44 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

THE WASH.



Day 73, Wednesday 25 Jun 2025

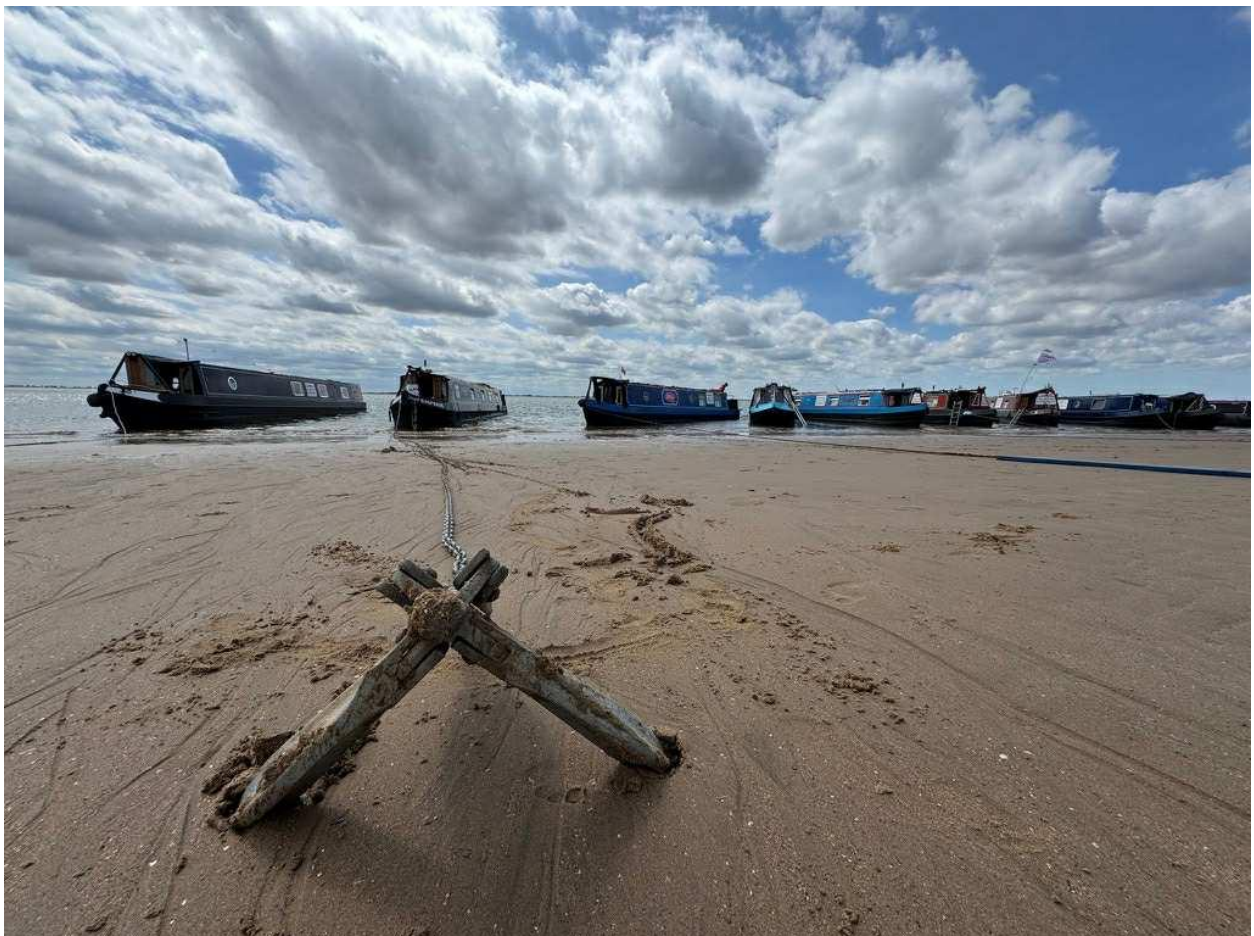
Boston to Wisbech Yacht Club– 44 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

THE WASH.



Hazel was disgruntled that she did not have time to serve her bacon butties on the beach. The tide waits for no man (or woman for that matter) not even Queen Boadicea. We were told to load up after about 45 minutes. Duncan

lifted Hugo up onto the bow by his life jackets handle with one hand as though he was a handbag. Up the ladder, collected the anchor and off we should go as soon as we were afloat.



Day 73, Wednesday 25 Jun 2025

Boston to Wisbech Yacht Club– 44 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

THE WASH.



There was a problem, September Sapphire was grounded and pushing us back onto the sand. Brian now had to help with his bargepole. Rum 'a' Gin had an even greater problem, the boat would not start!! They had to tie Rum 'a' Gin to Pardine Shift to be towed back to Wisbech.

Once we were all safely on our way, Hazel declared that this was the time to serve the bacon butties. She produced bacon or sausage sandwiches from her hatch. Boats took it in turn to sail up, make an order and grab it from hazel's outstretched hand,



Day 73, Wednesday 25 Jun 2025

Boston to Wisbech Yacht Club– 44 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

THE WASH.



A whole new meaning to a drive through.

Day 73, Wednesday 25 Jun 2025

Boston to Wisbech Yacht Club– 44 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

THE WASH.



We then stemmed the tide for a while and waited on the Wisbech safety boats to arrive, complete with three pilots that was coming out to guide our flotilla past the slalom of buoys to Wisbech harbour. In a true James Bond moment, the safety boat came alongside three boats, one at the front, one in the

middle and one at the back, the three pilots then boarded the three different boats.



When we got into Wisbech we were met by the harbour master in a dingy, his clipboard in hand checking that we all knew our mooring numbers. We reversed into our mooring alongside a sailboat, with September Sapphire then breasting up alongside of us. A hot debrief then took place, complete with a fish and chip supper, survivor's tipples and an amazing sunset.

The end of a memorable day.

Day 73, Wednesday 25 Jun 2025

Boston to Wisbech Yacht Club– 44 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

THE WASH.



Hot De-Brief and Sunset at Wisbech Yacht club

Day 73, Wednesday 25 Jun 2025

Boston to Wisbech Yacht Club– 44 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

THE WASH.



Our route across the Wash.

Day 74, Thursday 26 Jun 2025

Wisbech Yacht Harbour to Peterborough Yacht Club– 22 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



This was officially our last day on FBW cruise. We had to get off the tidal waters of the Nene, so we set off early 6:00 AM. Andrew Pheasey had instructed us to set off in order to avoid the tide making it impossible to get under two bridges on route. The problem was that the tide had not come in enough further up the river, so we had to, at times, travel simply by being pushed along by the incoming tide and only using propulsion to keep us in the centre of the river. We were due at the Dog in the Doublet lock where lockies would be waiting to see us through at 10 AM. At the Dog in the Doublet lock a BBC Look East reporter interviewed some of us for the telly. It was shown later that day and again on national morning breakfast TV the following morning. We moored up at Peterborough Yacht Club. We have arranged a mooring there for four weeks. Tomorrow we go home leaving the rest of the flotilla at Peterborough waiting on the lower Barnwell lock to get fixed so they can move on with their journey back to SIBC.

Day 75, Monday 21 July 2025

Peterborough Yacht Club to Ramsey High Load - 20.13 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



After being away from the boat for just over 3 weeks we returned ready for the next leg of the journey. Brian had been awake since early, so we were ready for off by 8:00 AM, having left the car at Peterborough Yacht Club. The first lock had its problem with a life buoy which had been thrown into the lock. Brian hooked it out, a man who was passing by then placed it back on its stand. Apparently, this is a regular occurrence at this lock. It makes you think what would, whoever keeps throwing it in, do if he or one of his friends fell in and needed it and it wasn't there!

Next, was a top up shop in Asda Peterborough. The nearest mooring was where all the swans and geese gathered. The ground was covered in bird poo and it stank! I had to hold the rope of THATSIT there for about 30 minutes while Brian legged it to Asda.



Day 75, Monday 21 July 2025

Peterborough Yacht Club to Ramsey High Load - 20.13 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Then on through the booked lock onto the 'Middle Levels'. This is the 'Fenlands', miles of straight, very boring waterways, with flat uninteresting, unrelenting reeds and nothing else to see and nowhere to moor for a doggy loo break.

Then the thunder and lightning started, with the accompanying heavy rain. Bri was getting soaked; I was getting bored. It was a long day, at 6:30 PM I was informed that we had arrived at our mooring for the night. A dead end, in a place called Ramsey.

It looked dodgy here, and it was, I saw the evidence to prove it. A fellow boater had to help us turn in the winding hole because we were stuck, after a bit of pulling and tugging we managed to get the boat turned around and moored up for the night. Bri stripped off his wet clothes and had a shower to warm up. The only consolation was, that our supper was all ready to eat, having been made earlier and left to cook in the new slow cooker that Rachel gave Brian for his birthday. Spag bol, it was very nice too.



Day 76, Tuesday 22 July 2025

**Ramsey High Load to Holme and then on to George Ramsey Forty Foot
10.75 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts**



After an uneventful night and a good sleep, we had a little walk into Ramsey before setting off on a silver propeller challenge. The drains are very straight and low level with flat fenland either side boarded by tall reeds so nothing much to see. At one point we did see three people who appeared to be playing golf. Indeed, there was a course spanning either side of the navigation. One of the golfers tried to engage in a conversation as we passed. We couldn't hear him so shouted out, 'can't hear you' then he told us to shhhh because his partner was about to tee off. Bloody golf!



Day 76, Tuesday 22 July 2025

Ramsey High Load to Holme and then on to George Ramsey Forty Foot
10.75 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Some of the bridges were very low and we only just scraped under. The newdyke got narrower and narrower as we approached its head.

Day 76, Tuesday 22 July 2025

**Ramsey High Load to Holme and then on to George Ramsey Forty Foot
10.75 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts**



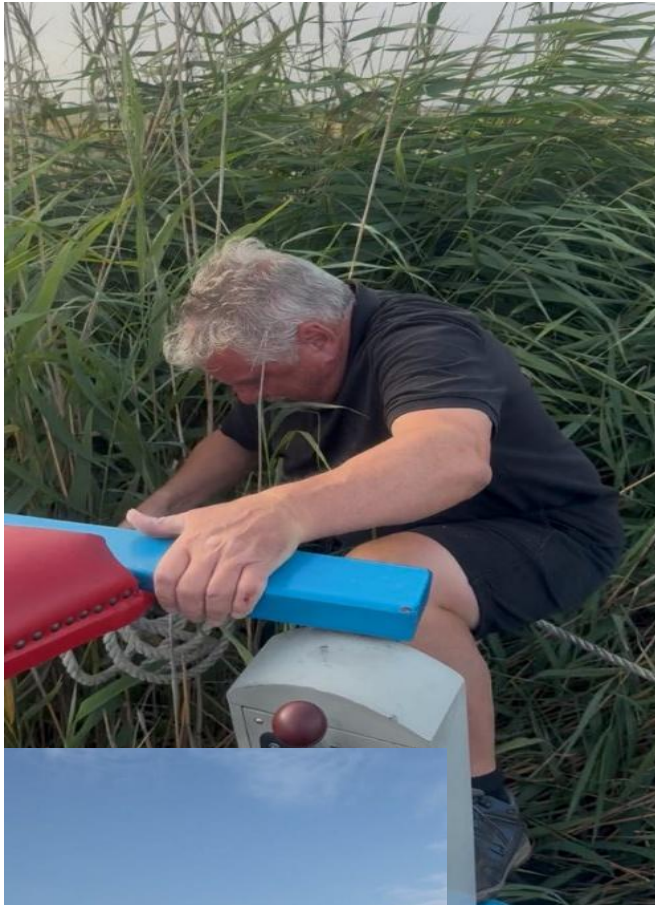
We followed behind a family of Swans with one adult leading the way, 7 cygnets, followed by the other parents bringing up the rear.



Brian got his photo for his Silver Propeller, he was a happy chappie, so then we cruised back towards Ramsey where we were moored for the night outside a pub called The George Ramsey on the Forty Foot.

Day 77, Wednesday 23 July 2025

George Ramsey Forty Foot to Salters Load Lock - 29.13 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



After three days down the drain on the Middle Level, boredom was setting in. We then moved onto a Creek and a drama arose. After being on the Drain and now on the Creek I think we could say we was up Shit Creek.



The blanket weed on this section had defeated THATSIT, we were getting nowhere, but it had not defeated the skipper. He jumped

ship, bow rope in hand, got wet up to his knees, thrashed at the weeds with a barge pole. Then proceeded to pull our 10 Ton boat by rope 1/4 of a mile to the next bridge, where he then jumped back onto the boat roof from the bridge railings, proper 007 style, now that livened things up a bit.

Day 78, Thursday 24 July 2025

Salters Load Lock to Ely – 14.00 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



After our exhausting day yesterday it was a bit tough to get up and be ready to be penned through Salters Load lock at 8:30 AM. The stretch of tidal river to Denver lock takes only about 10 minutes and then you arrive on the river great Ouse. We then had 4 hours cruising in the drizzle, before we arrived in Ely. It was then on with the boaty jobs, water, elsan and the like. Jobs done, we then found a nice mooring right outside the local pub, couldn't be better.

Day 79, Friday 25 July 2025

Ely to Hermitage Lock – 14.03 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



A lovely morning spent in Ely, walking around, taking in the architecture and vibes. Breakfast at the cathedral cafe which was absolutely immaculate and a wander down to the antiques centre.



Then on our way towards St. Ives, on a peaceful winding river with little traffic and the sun shining, lovely. Moored up tonight at Hermitage lock ready to be penned out in the morning for our onward journey towards St Ives.

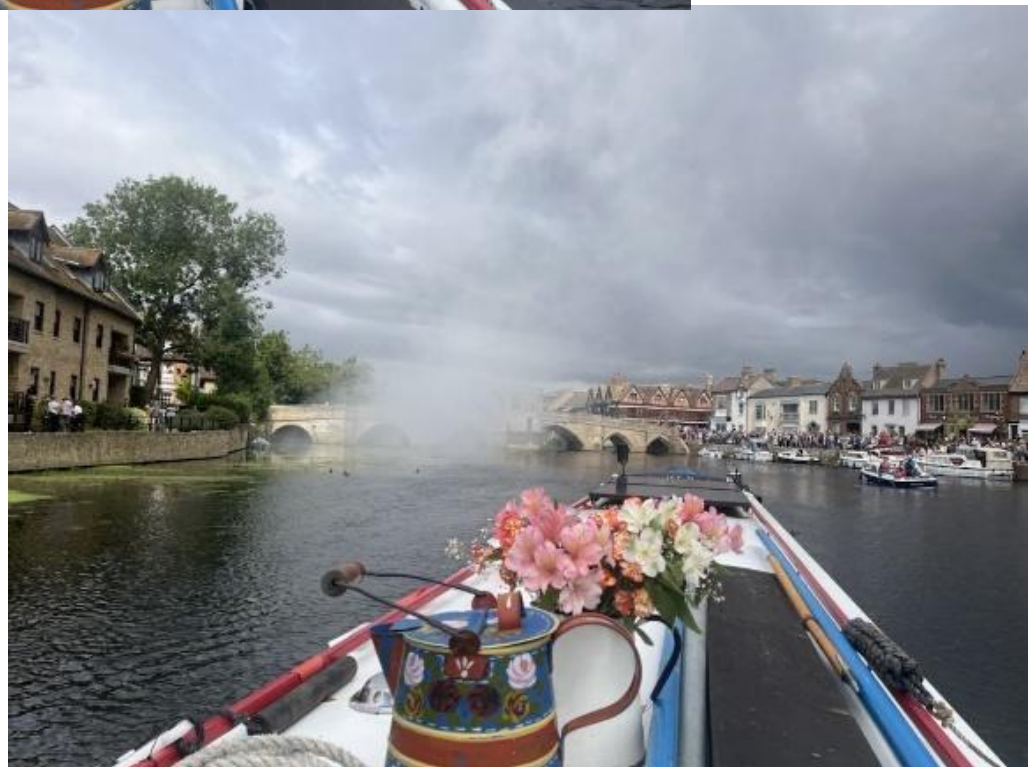
Day 80, Saturday 26 July 2025

Hermatage Lock to St Neots– 20.00 miles, 9 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



It's rained quite a lot today, yet it had some exciting moments too. As we approached St. Ives the lockie said to us that the navigation would be closed for about half an hour whilst they blew up the bridge!

We were baffled, sure enough a safety boat prevented us from proceeding under the St. Ives bridge and the quayside was rammed with people. Then some 'Roundheads' on horses charged across the 600 year old bridge followed by some very long and loud bangs and explosions. We had unexpectedly got caught up in a reenactment of the English Civil War, it was all very exciting. We moored up briefly, to have a quick look around, and then onwards towards St. Neots.



Day 80, Saturday 26 July 2025

Hermatage Lock to St Neots– 20.00 miles, 9 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



The rain was heavy now, but we were delighted to see Shirley and Van on September Saffire coming in the opposite direction, we hovered mid river to have a quick catch up.

At St. Neots they were having the annual rowing regatta which meant that the moorings would be scarce, so Bri, in his usual wisdom, moored at the end of the rowing boat launching area, in front of hundreds of people camping and rowing boats all over the place. We were not supposed to be there, I found a free spot the other side of the St Neots road bridge. It was late, nearly dark, Bri agreed to move to the new mooring point I had found. He took all the pins out of the bank that were holding the boat, so that he could start the move, he then tried to start the engine, guess what, it would not start! Now even darker, floating along adrift, rowing boat equipment everywhere, the day was becoming too long and too stressful. Eventually we got the boat started and moved to the alternative mooring, it had now got dark! But we got moored up, had beef burgers for dinner at around 10:00 PM, a long and eventful day.

Day 81, Sunday 27 July 2025

St Neots to Great Barford – 11.5 miles, 5 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Arranged to meet Andy and Sarah for brunch at Bohemian in St. Neots at 11 AM. Had a good chat over a well cooked Breakfast, moving on in the afternoon to Great Barford. We moored up next to the village green, whilst kids body boarded and swam in the river. In the evening we watched the euro final between England's Lionesses and Spain. We won, after a penalty shootout. Then had a nice evening walk to discover the delights of Great Barford. There weren't any. So went to the pub instead and had a beer.

Day 82, Monday 28 July 2025

Great Barford to Kempston back to Great Barford – 14.50 miles, 8 Locks, 0 MB,0 Aqueducts



Today was the last leg of the great Ouse trip to the end of the navigation in Kempston – Bedford. We stopped for a whippy ice cream to celebrate.



There were only four locks but they had very heavy gates, I was glad when they were done. The only thing was we had to do the same four locks on the way back to Great Barford. Bri says this is the start of the return journey back to Donny.

Day 83, Tuesday 29 July 2025

Great Barford to Godmanchester – 20.50 miles, 6 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Today was a basic day of cruising and doing locks. The day started with a great walk for Hugo on the Meadow at Godmanchester. On route we met a friendly couple on their small river cruiser, who we shared a number of locks with.

Day 84, Wednesday 30 July 2025

Godmanchester to Hermatage Lock– 12.50 miles, 5 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueduct



Late start today after Hugo's run around the meadows and a quick slip into Godmanchester for a coffee.

Day 84, Wednesday 30 July 2025

Godmanchester to Hermatage Lock– 12.50 miles, 5 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueduct



Spot That's it!

Onto Horton lock where we moored briefly, illegally, to go and look at the Horton Mill which is a NT property but not open on a Wednesday. Moored back in Saint Ives again for Brian to prepare dinner in the slow cooker and me to have a very long chinwag with a woman from Wakefield who was missing living in Yorkshire. Filled up with diesel at Hartford Marina and emptied the second toilet cassette. The facilities on the great Ouse are few and far between. Had a look around St. Ives museum to learn more about the area. Then more cruising in the soft warm evening sunlight, down to Hermitage lock.

Day 85, Thursday 31 July 2025

Hermatage Lock to Ely – 16.00 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



It was chucking it down this morning when we were supposed to get through the lock, so we had a coffee and waited until the rain stopped, which was sensible for once. Late morning, the sun appeared and we enjoyed a lock free and carefree cruise into Ely, picking brambles on route. Luckily there was a good mooring, right on the queyside, when we got to Ely.



Took Hugs for a long walk before dinner in the Cutters Inn. Oh, not to forget my little purchase, in the antiques centre a 1930s cream mantle vase by A. Wood. I've had my eye on one of these for awhile!

Day 86, Friday 1 August 2025

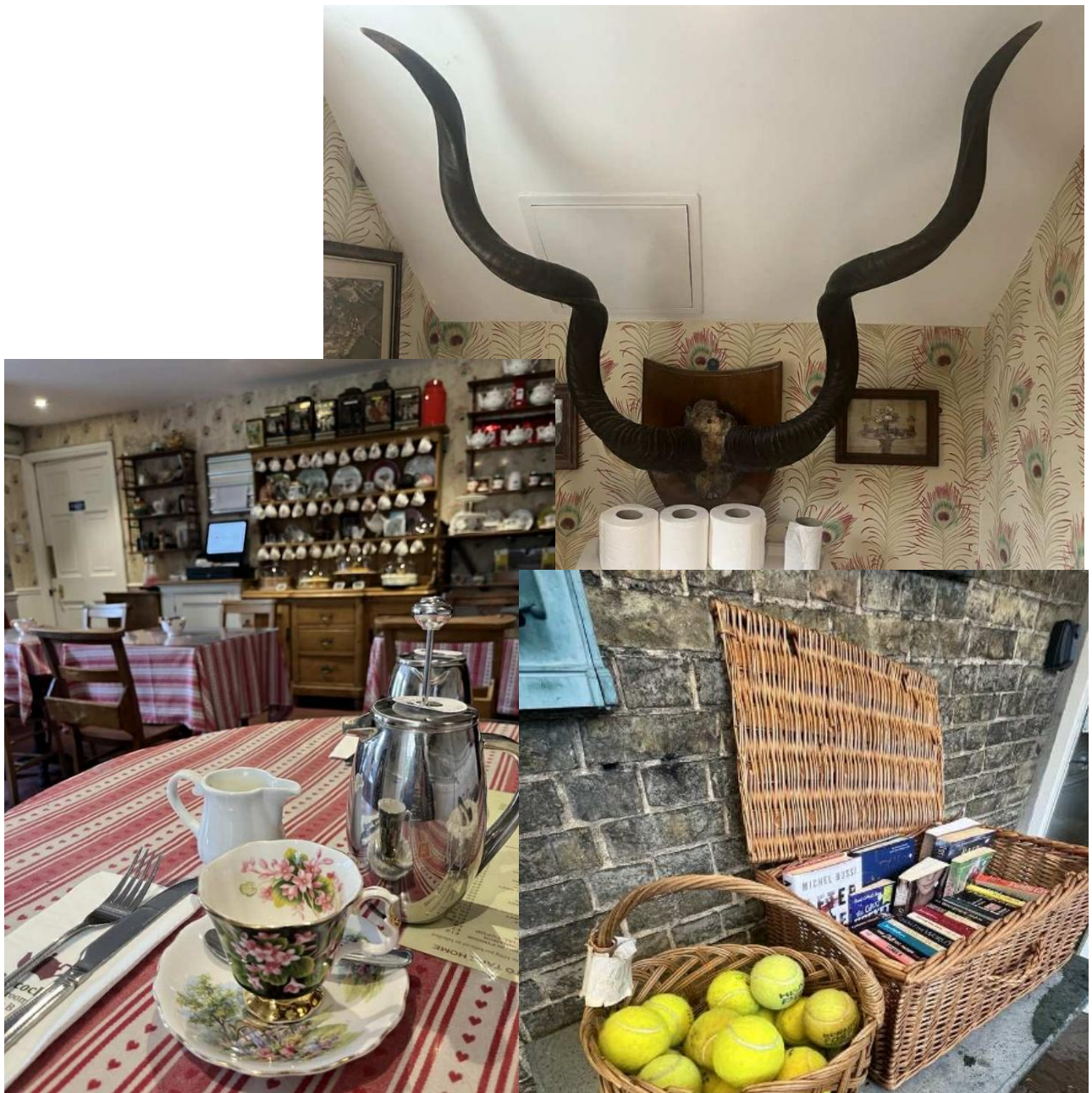
Happy Yorkshire day in Ely – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



August 1st, the very first thing that had to be done was raising the flag on the scaffolding pole, to let everyone know that we are Yorkshire, and proud of it!

Day 86, Friday 1 August 2025

Happy Yorkshire day in Ely – 0 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



It was very wet in the morning, so we went to a really lovely vintage tea room, 'Peacocks', in here they serve over 50 varieties of tea, but **not** Yorkshire tea. Even the toilet was interesting, with a giant pair of antlers over the loo. Bought Hugo 6 tennis balls there too, I'm sure he will appreciate that. Then we did a big shop in Tesco. Met Shirley and Van in the evening, ready for our campaign cruise this weekend.

Day 87, Saturday 2 August 2025

Ely to Upware Lock – 5.50 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



After filling up with water in Ely we set off, together with Van and Shirley on September Sapphire, in the direction of Bates Bite Lock on the river Cam. There, we are joining other boats to cruise on a FBW campaign cruise to Bates Bite Lock, which has been inoperable for over a year, and prevents navigation into Cambridge. Hence the protest. We sailed a few miles and breasted up at the Five Miles From Anywhere public house. Tomorrow will be an early start to get to the briefing point for 10 AM.

Day 88, Sunday 3 August 2025

Upware Lock to Pope's Corner via Baits Bite Lock – 20.81 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



An early start at 7:30 AM to leg it down to the meeting point for the FBW campaign cruise to Baits Bite Lock. We passed some interesting boats along the way, one being a steamboat. After the morning briefing and photo call, about 13 boats, cruisers, narrowboats and wilderness boats set off at 10 AM.



Day 88, Sunday 3 August 2025

Upware Lock to Pope's Corner via Baits Bite Lock – 20.81 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



We went slowly, in single file, to the broken lock. Moored up, tide together, to meet the Ely and East Cambridgeshire MP, to make our protest about lack of funding for the repair at this lock, and funding shortfalls in general. Return journey to a mooring, just past Popes Corner, but Brian and I got nice and wet from a heavy downpour in the process!

Postscript to Campaign cruise.

Shortly after this campaign cruise the Mayor of Cambridge Council pledged £500,000 towards the repair of these locks in the hope that it would encourage other businesses to step forward and pledge further monies.

The following article then appeared in Cambridgeshire Live 29 September 2025.

River Cam lock expected to reopen 20 months after closure

The lock has been closed since May 2024. The repairs are expected to take four months to complete.



Baits Bite Lock in [Cambridge](#) is expected to reopen around 20 months after its closure, as stabilisation work gets underway. The lock was closed last May, after a survey commissioned by the Conservators of the [River Cam](#) revealed structural issues with the lock island.

[Repair work](#) has started and the Conservators expect this to take approximately 16 weeks. Added to the 16 months that have already passed, this would result in a total closure period of approximately 20 months.

A spokesperson for the Conservators commented: "Stabilisation works at Baits Bite Lock Island were mobilised earlier this month and are now progressing well. The project is focused on reinforcing and securing the lock island to ensure its long-term resilience and safety.

"All works are being carried out with careful consideration for the surrounding environment and waterway users. As part of the safety measures, booms have been installed to restrict access to adjacent areas of the river.



The lock has been closed since May 2024

"The programme is expected to take approximately 16 weeks to complete, [weather](#) dependant. We appreciate the continued patience and cooperation of the local community and visitors during this period."

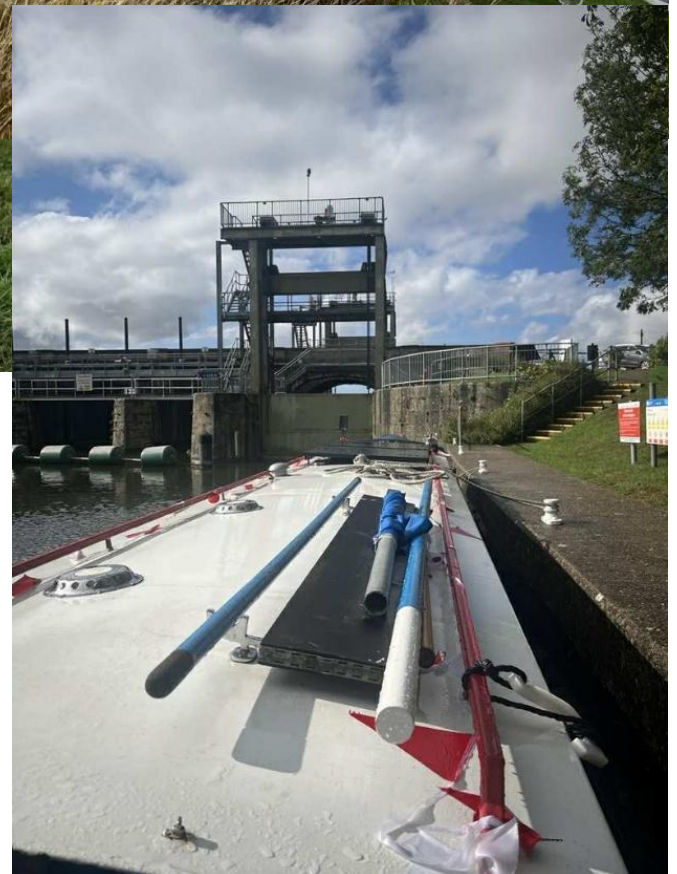
[CambridgeshireLive](#) has approached [Cambridge City Council](#) for comment

What a result, FBW may have highlighted the Issue and invited the local MP. It then made the news and got noticed.

Whilst we may have played a small role in this, it is certainly satisfying to know, that the campaign we have been on all year, did actually achieve something, other than raising general awareness of the plight of Britain's Waterways.

Day 89, Monday 4 August 2025

Pope's Corner to Denver Sluice – 20.00 miles, 0 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Stopped off in Ely for supplies and to empty the loo, bid farewell for now to Van and Shirley, then off on a four hour stint, in storm Floris!! Brian got wet, again, it was very blowy, hence choppy, we must be mad. Got to Denver sluice to find that the tide won't be suitable until 4:00 PM tomorrow! What the hell do you do at Denver lock for a day?! At least the sun is shining, for now.

Day 90, Tuesday 5 August 2025

Denver Sluice to Salters Load Lock – 0.75 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Had a lazy morning

Day 90, Tuesday 5 August 2025

Denver Sluice to Salters Load Lock – 0.75 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Then walked with Hugo, for about an hour along the riverbank into Downham Market, because we had run out of toilet paper!

Downham Market is in Norfolk and we have never been to Norfolk before. The town was quite nice with a clock tower in the marketplace. Had a coffee outside a little café where Hugo got all the attention, picked up the bog roll from Morrisons and walked back to Denver sluice. A hike of about 2 1/2 hours in total, a long way to walk, however, loo paper is definitely an essential!



Day 90, Tuesday 5 August 2025

Denver Sluice to Salters Load Lock – 0.75 miles, 2 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



At 5:30 PM we got the go ahead from the lockie that the neap tide was in and there was enough water to get us to Salter's Lode Lock and back onto the drains on the middle level. The lady lock keeper at Salter's Lode handed us a well done sticker in a fishing net! I must say Brian did a jolly good job of getting into the lock in that very high wind.

Day 91, Wednesday 6 August 2025

Salters Load Lock to March – 14.50 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



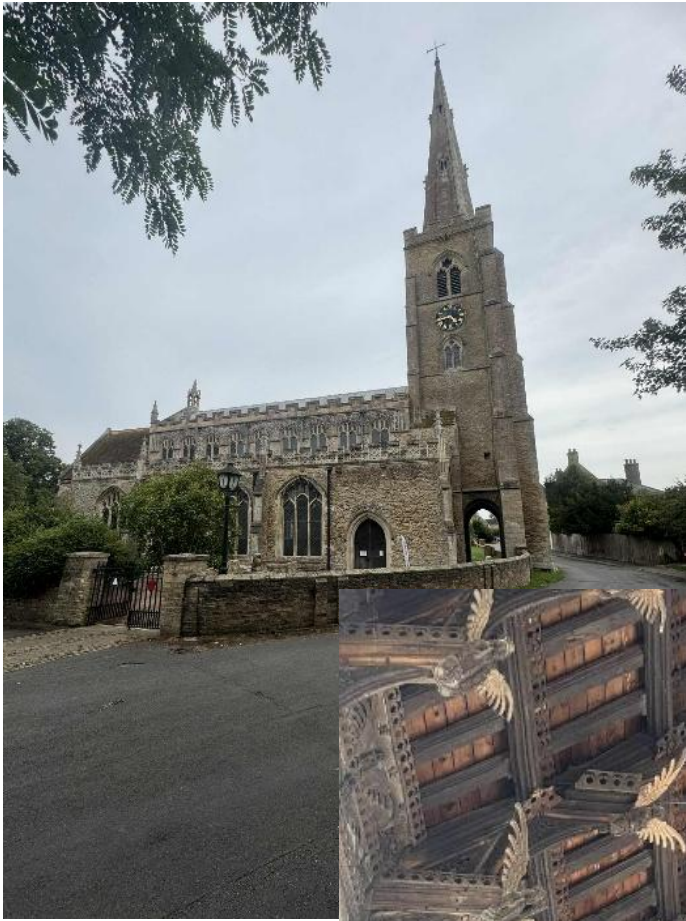
The weather has returned to the pleasant sunny sort, after the wind and rain of storm Floris. We left Salters Load lock around 10:30 AM, heading to March. Back to straight Fenland waters and flat as a pancake scenery, although the fields have turned to golden as the farmers have been at work harvesting and leaving giant straw stacks on the banks.

Upwell and Outwell are back-to-back villages along the Well Creek. Some interesting early 20th century houses to see. One lock today at Marmont Priory lock which was very heavy, with too much winding, so Brian did it. I entertained a young Eastern European fishermen, who got the warning from Hugsy as he tried to look inside the boat, good boy Hugs!



Day 91, Wednesday 6 August 2025

Salters Load Lock to March – 14.50 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Moored up in March right outside the Ship Inn. Had fish and chips for supper. Brian went to look at the church which Sir John Betjeman raved about. I stayed put, don't like the vibes here, will be glad to be gone tomorrow morning.

Day 92, Thursday 7 August 2025

March to Petersbough Yacht Club – 16.91 miles, 3 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Not much to say about today other than it was a continuation of yesterday along the long straight drains of the Fen. We left March just before 9 a.m, five hours later we arrived at Stanground Lock. The lady lock keeper had a different way of holding us steady in the lock whilst it was filled. After tying us up, she asked Bri to put the boat in forward, so that the rope was taught, which he did, then kept it in gear with low revs as the lock filled, it worked a treat.

After that it was a 1 ½ hour cruise up the Nene with one lock to get to Peterborough Yacht Club. We then tide up, filled the boat with water and whilst I packed up, Brian cooked tonight's tea, to go in the slow cooker so that it would be ready when we got back to York. Last job to do before leaving was empty the cassette so that we would be all ready for off when we come back at the beginning of September.

We left Peterborough at 5.30 p.m. and got back to York just before 8 p.m. Our Green Thai Curry was ready for us when we got home. I am liking this new slow cooker more and more.

It appears that our campaign cruise to Bates Bite Lock was in the Ely Standard. Photo included is of us, September Saffire and the lead boat heading for Baites Bite Lock.

Day 93, Saturday 16 August 2025

Petersbough Yacht Club to Islip Lock – 31.65 miles, 14 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



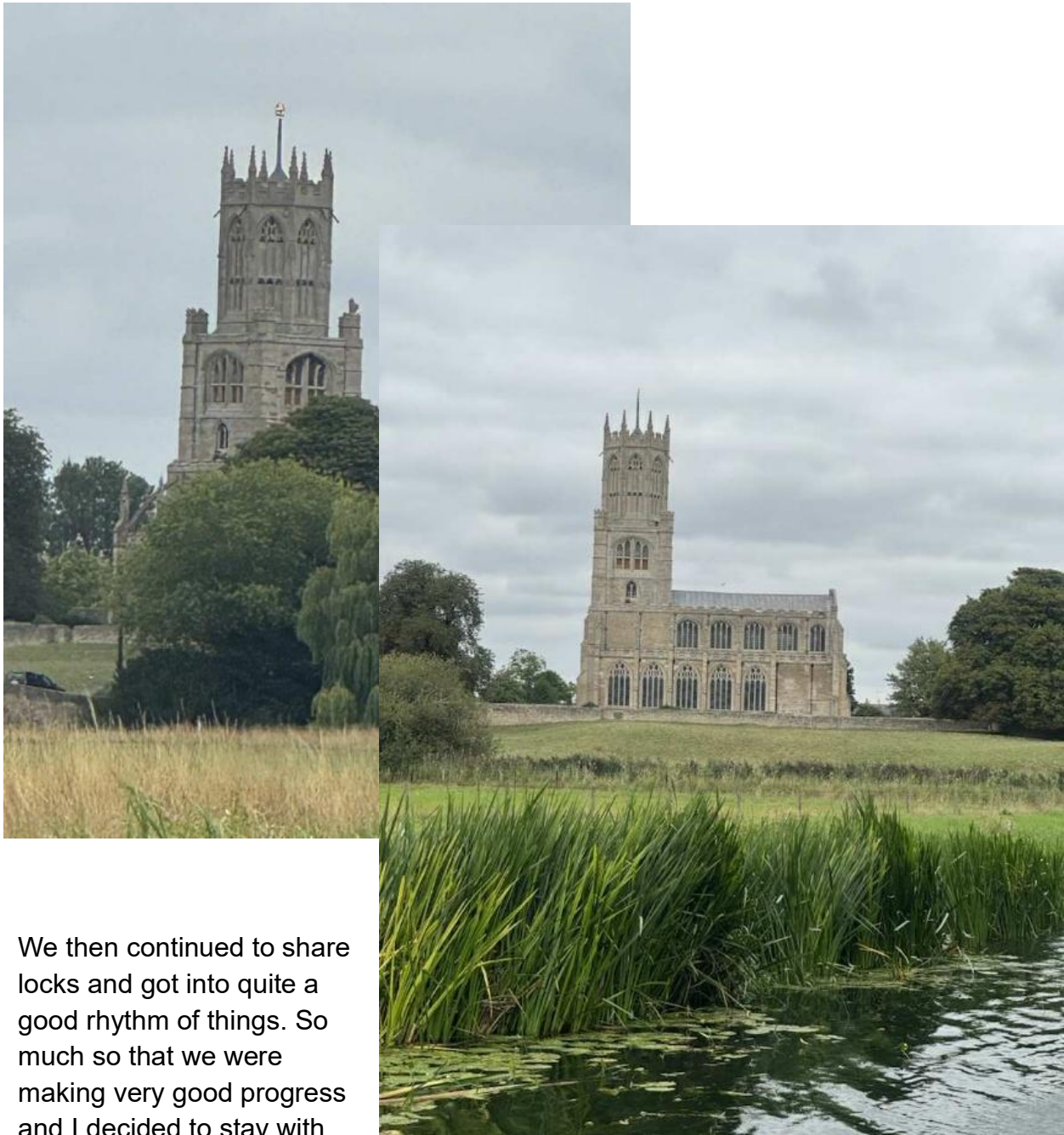
Today the log is being taken over by the skipper. As we have had notification from CRT that the Northampton flight of 17 locks will be closing for an undetermined amount of time on Wednesday the 20th of August. I therefore have to get Thatsit off the Nene before that date, so I jumped on a train leaving Joe behind with Ted and Arthur. I got to Peterborough Yacht Club around 9:30 PM yesterday and got things ready for an early start. This morning I was up at 5:45 and on the move by 6:45 AM.

It was a hard morning working the locks by myself, after four locks in I noticed a small café at the side of Yarwell lock here, I managed to get a bacon sandwich and a cup of coffee whilst working the lock. That was 11:30 AM, it's a good job that I did because at the next lock another Narrowboat came up behind me. We then started to share the locks. I didn't know then that the next time I would be able to stop for food would be at 9 this evening! It became apparent that Narrowboat Henry Chicheele with Andy & Jen on board we're doing the same dash as me.



Day 93, Saturday 16 August 2025

Petersbough Yacht Club to Islip Lock – 31.65 miles, 14 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



We then continued to share locks and got into quite a good rhythm of things. So much so that we were making very good progress and I decided to stay with

them. Only thing was they had only just set off an hour before they joined me so were just really starting their day. They didn't want to stop. So for me, after 31 miles 5 1/2 furlongs and 14 locks, at 9:00 PM, when daylight had given up, we stopped for the night, I could then make tea..... ready for an 8:00 AM start in the morning.

Day 94, Sunday 17 August 2025

Islip Lock to Abington Lock (skipper log day 2) – 24.34 miles, 19 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



CRT made a further announcement regarding canal closures. Not only will the Northampton arm close after this Wednesday but so also will among other canals the Oxford (northern) and the Coventry canal. On Monday 25 August. My 'dash' has just been extended to get Thatsit passed Fazeley Junction before Bank Holiday Monday 25 August.

It was therefore another early start with NB Henry Chichele and Andy and Jen at 8:00 AM. Weather has been hot and sunny all day. It has been a day of constant locks, one after another after another. Unfortunately, not much else to say as we have been on a mission to get as far as we could in the day.

All that is until about 6:30 PM when at one of the locks there was so much water coming in at the top end I could not hold Thatsit to get off. Had to try and hold Thatsit in full reverse to stay still. It was only when Henry Chichele got into the lock also, we could then hold the two boats tied together whilst I got out and was able to close the bottom guillotine gates. Having got through the Lock it became apparent that the constant leakage through the gates had dropped the river level by about 8 inches, Thatsit grounded between pounds slightly, but I did get over it and into the next lock. Henry Chichele was not so lucky being 68 foot long he grounded good and proper. I then had to reverse Thatsit out of the lock until I could get my stern alongside Henry's bow. I tied their bow rope onto my stern and with Thatsit pulling and Henry on full power we pulled him free. At 8:45 we got moored up outside the pub which is only a 2-hour cruise away from the Northampton arm. So, it looks like we will make the lock flight tomorrow morning with two days in hand.



Day 95, Monday 18 August 2025

Abington Lock to Buckby bottom lock. (skipper log day 3) – 18.19 miles, 19 Locks, 1 MB, 0 Aqueducts



What can I say, only that today has been another long day on my drive to get Thatsit back before the Midland canal network closes down. 7:00 AM, start heading through two double locks before the start of the 17 lock climb up the Northampton arm. All 17 locks are narrow locks, so no boat to share the work with. Started the 1st of the 17 locks at 8:45 AM and worked nonstop until 1:30 PM when finally, I reached the top lock.

Stop for lunch at Gayston Junction before pushing on until 7:15 when I reached Buckby Bottom Lock. Could not go any further, as these locks are under time restrictions, they can only be opened and used between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM, but looking on the brightside, I can have a bit of a lie in in the morning as I cannot move off until 10 AM.

Day 96, Tuesday 19 August 2025

Buckby bottom lock to Hillmorton top lock. (skipper log day 4) – 12.94 miles,
12 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Morning Rush Hour – Boats waiting for the locks to open.

Day 96, Tuesday 19 August 2025

Buckby bottom lock to Hillmorton top lock. (skipper log day 4) – 12.94 miles,
12 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Interesting start today. At 8:00 AM I moved Thatsit to the lock landing at Buckby bottom lock. I was first in the queue for when it opened. Good job I did as by 10:00 AM, there was a dozen boats queued up behind me. We all had a good chinwag regarding our final end destinations.

Shared the 12 locks today with a new lock partner, working well together as a team. First time through Braunston tunnel. No other interesting anecdotes today, it was another day of just getting on with it. It is worth noting that the water levels here on the Oxford (Northen) are substantially lower than normal. Got to Hillmorton lock just before 6:00 PM, had to stop for the day again as these locks are also under time restrictions. No messing about though, moored on the lock landing for the night, so was already in pole position for the morning. Had steak pie and chips at the local pub.

Day 97, Wednesday 20 August 2025

Hillmorton top lock to Springwood Haven Marina (skipper log day 5) – 23.31 miles, 4 Locks, 1 MB, 0 Aqueducts



First in line again for the locks, as I moored up on the lock landing. Good start to the day, first three locks through by 10:30 AM. It was then on to Rugby where I stopped to get provisions from the Tesco there.

Then onwards towards Hawksbury junction where I stopped for tea at the Greyhound.

Then again it was a push until I ran out of daylight just before Springwood Haven Marina.

Other than 3 assisted locks and one small stop lock at Hawksbury junction it has been just a sit there and plod on type of day.

Still in this race against the clock the last thing I need is problems, let's see what tomorrow brings us.



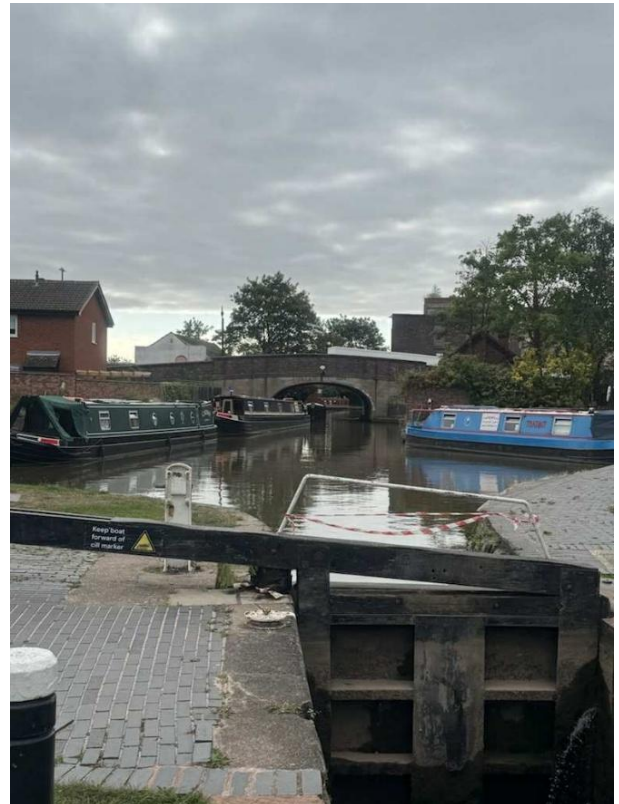
Day 98, Thursday 21 August 2025

Springwood Haven Marina to Lichfield Road Bridge, (skipper log day 6) –

16.84 miles, 13 Locks, 0 MB, 2 Aqueducts

Another early start, on the go at 7:00 AM in order to get to Atherstone top lock before they opened. Arrived just after 9:00 AM there were three boats ahead of me waiting to go down. Managed to get to the bottom of the 11 lock flight by 12:45. There were two boats coming towards me so I asked them how long it had taken them to get from Glascote locks. They told me 2 1/2 hours. As Glascote locks are also under time restrictions (closing at 2:00 PM) I resigned myself that I was not going to get there today.

At 3:30, other boats passing me, going the other way, started to tell me that there was a big queue at Glascote locks as the locks had been out of action for a couple of hours. The canal and river gods must have taken pity on



me. When I got there there were four boats still waiting to go down. CRT had, because of the stoppage earlier, agreed to keep the locks open to allow the queuing boats to get through, so I just joined the back of it and got down at 4:30. Unfortunately for the other three boats who came down Atherstone locks before me, I had passed them on route, as they had also resigned that they would not get down today and had stopped for lunch.

So, I am now out of the 'danger zone', but I still went on for a further 2 hours before stopping around 6:30, outside two canal side pubs by Lichfield road bridge. Went for a well-earned tea at the little Otter which is

about halfway between Fazely Junction and Fradley Junction.

Day 99, Friday 22 August 2025

Lichfield Road Bridge to Shobnall Marina, (skipper log day 7) – 17.69 miles, 10 Locks, 1 MB, 2 Aqueducts

Nothing to stop an early start, so on the move at 7:30 AM, passing a fellow FBW boater George Seaward, at Whittington, evidently, we moored in his mooring earlier in the year at Hinckley Boat Club.



Managed to get to Shobnall Marina at 5:30 PM too late for diesel as they closed at 3:00. So moored up for the night ready to fill up in the morning when they open at 9:00 AM. It has been the busiest day on the canal system of the year today. Having had to queue to get through the last four locks. (This is not counting morning starts at the time restricted locks). Last day tomorrow before heading home to share the Granddog sitting duties as Darlene is coming to stay with us tonight for a week.



Day 100, Saturday 23 August 2025

Shobnall Marina to Willington, (skipper log day 8) – 5.03 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Today in comparison was a late start, after filling up Thatsit with 200 litres of diesel (she was very thirsty). I set off in search of Pip and Mick on Oleanna. They were not too hard to find and after a gruelling morning setting off at 9:00 AM, filling the boat up with diesel, it was time at 9:30 to stop for a coffee. Gave Pip and Mick their windlass and key back, commented on how many boats were moored up in places not normally associated with moorings. It appears everyone is staking their claim to moorings ready for the close down of the central canal system on the 25th of August. They want to be near services, water, shops and of course pubs. Then it was through my only lock of the day and on into Willington, emptied the cassette, filled the water tank then set off for home. Not a good day for travelling I had forgotten it was bank holiday weekend and only very limited train services. No train at all from Willington so bus to Derby, then three trains, Derby to Sheffield, Sheffield to Doncaster and finally Doncaster to York. Six hours later, finally got home, at 7:00 PM

Day 101, Thursday 4 September 2025

Willington to Trent Lock – 14.19 miles, 8 Locks, 0 MB, 3 Aqueducts



It was raining heavily this morning, so I asked the 'skipper' if we could go into the Mercia Marina for a coffee. Well, what a surprise, it's full of posh shops, restaurants, hair salons et cetera. Bought a dress from Joe Browns, while Brian and Hugo sheltered from the rain.



We set off despite the rain and ploughed our way through the 8 locks that take us to Trent Lock. The weather improved as the day progressed, it turned out to be quite a relaxing afternoon. Although we did not arrive at Trent Lock until late. There, we were treated to a beautiful sunset, with the sailboats from Trent Valley sailing club racing past. Weather looks promising for tomorrow.

Day 101, Thursday 4 September 2025

Willington to Trent Lock – 14.19 miles, 8 Locks, 0 MB, 3 Aqueducts



Trent Valley Sailing Club at Trent Lock.

Day 102, Friday 5 September 2025

Trent Lock to Gunthorpe – 20.84 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



After Hugo's morning walk, we set off, stopping at 'Tony's' café at Beeston for a cooked breakfast. Then on to Beeston proper, where we did a lightning stop, for a few provisions at Sainsbury's that Bri had missed off the Tesco order yesterday. On then, though Nottingham and on to Home Lock, which luckily for us was still manned, with a Vlockie. The weather today has been perfect, sunny but not too hot and the river was quiet and peaceful.

Bri skilfully avoided the sandbank at Stoke Lock, knowing that David & Claudia had grounded there earlier in the season and had to spend the night on the sandbank. Found the last space at Gunthorpe visitors mooring, that required Bri to reverse Thatsit between a load of posh gin palaces.



Day 102, Friday 5 September 2025

Trent Lock to Gunthorpe – 20.84 miles, 7 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



**He did a brilliant job of it with even one of the Gin Palace owners saying to me
'he's done this before hasn't he.'**

Day 103, Saturday 6 September 2025

Gunthorpe to Cromwell Lock – 18.56 miles, 4 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



Four big locks today on the non-tidal Trent and all were manned, Thank you vlockies, I am a very grateful first mate. Moored up at Cromwell lock ready for our penning out tomorrow morning.

Day 103, Saturday 6 September 2025

Gunthorpe to Cromwell Lock – 18.56 miles, 4 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts

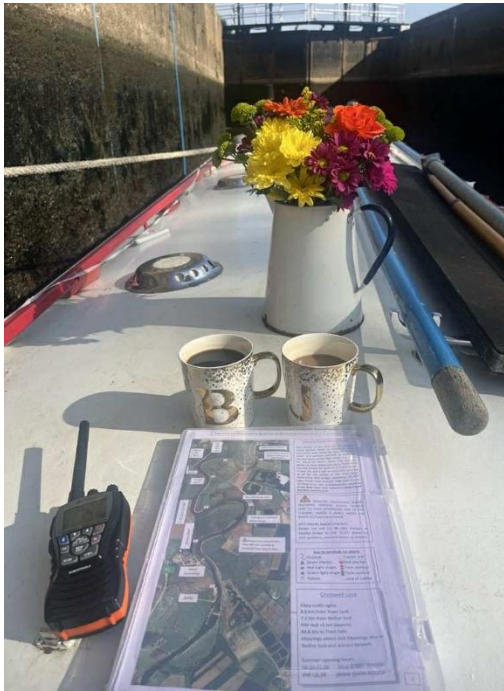


Took Hugo for a walk into the village and surprisingly found the Milestone brewery there. It's great! Had a drink and wandered back home to a Mr D chilli for supper.



Day 104, Sunday 7 September 2025

Cromwell Lock to Torksey – 16.31 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



We penned down from Cromwell onto the tidal section of the river Trent at 10:30. All prepared with charts, VHS, life jackets and even binoculars! The weather in the morning was just perfect, sunny and warm, I even sat up on the roof in T-shirts and shorts. The journey to Torksey is about four hours and there were very few boats on the river, then out of nowhere two speedboats, one pulling a very skilled water skier. This livened things up, then Brian got wet as the skies opened for a storm just as we moored on the pontoon at Talksey. Took hugs for a Riverside walk before tea.

Day 105, Munday 8 September 2025

Torksey to Keadby – 27.75 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



After a night at Torksey, all by ourselves on the pontoon, we set off for Keadby. This was a little later than the lock keeper suggested, Brian thought that we would be pushing against the spring tide for too long.

At Gainsborough, Brian rang the Locky to see if it was still OK for us to continue to Keadby, because the spring tide had brought lots of silt into the mouth of the lock there. We got the go ahead, as usual Bri made a textbook entry into the lock. On



arrival at Keadby, we enquired as to whether we could get through the sliding rail bridge today. The signal man there said 'not today as the temperature was too high to operate the bridge'. The temperature should be OK in the morning. The temperature needs to be below 16 degrees for operating the bridge, so here we are on the lock landing in front of the rail bridge only 50 yards away from the trains, it may be a noisy night!!

Day 105, Munday 8 September 2025

Torksey to Keadby – 27.75 miles, 1 Locks, 0 MB, 0 Aqueducts



At West Stockwith we saw Nick Roberts on the bank, taking our photo, which he kindly sent to us. The weather was sunny but a bit chilly.

Day 106, Tuesday 9 September 2025

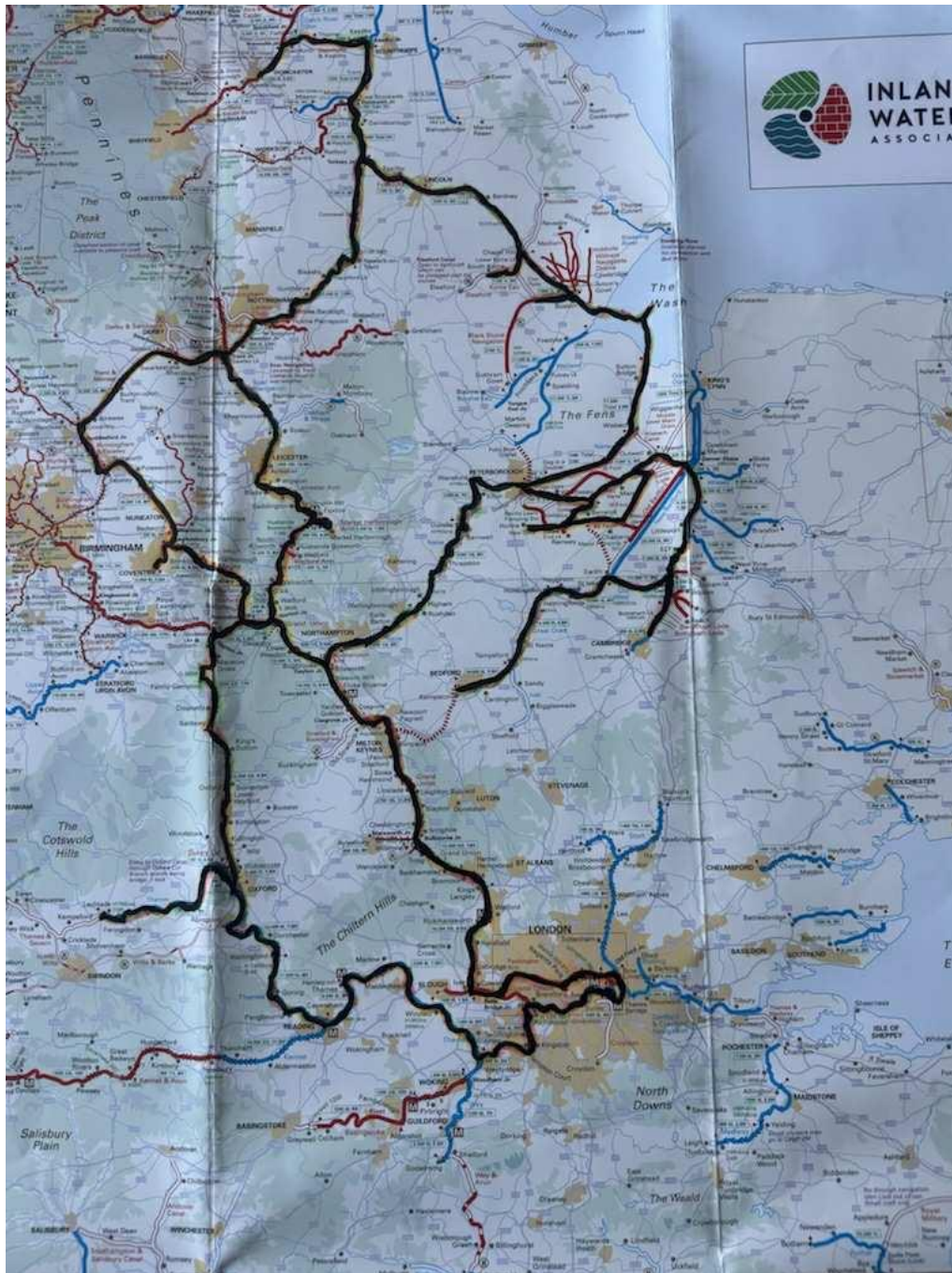
Keadby to Strawberry Island BC – 20.66 miles, 3 Locks, 12 MB, 0 Aqueducts



The last day, an early start 7:00 AM, the signal man on Vazon Sliding Rail Bridge allowed us through as the temperature was low enough to enable him to operate the bridge mechanism. It was perfect weather, warm, not too hot, sunny and with little wind. We pushed on along the very last leg of our journey.

Day 106, Tuesday 9 September 2025

Keadby to Strawberry Island BC – 20.66 miles, 3 Locks, 12 MB, 0 Aqueducts



After an epic cruise of 1340.81 miles, 486 locks, 40 movable bridges and 106 days on the move, not forgetting the 85 aqueducts, we returned safely to our home mooring. It has been a most wonderful experience, with challenges along the way. We have laughed a lot, and enjoyed the company of our fellow boaters, met lots of different people with different lifestyles and stories to tell. Stayed in the most posh of places such as Windsor and Henley-on-Thames along with small towns and villages in parts of the country we would never have explored if not for this summer of sunshine and the drive to promote a cause close to our hearts.

Day 106, Tuesday 9 September 2025

Keadby to Strawberry Island BC – 20.66 miles, 3 Locks, 12 MB, 0 Aqueducts



All boats and crew safely back home - Fund Britain's Waterways campaign 2025 you have been a blast.

As we went along on the cruise, we managed to get articles published recording our activities. I have attached these to this document, so they do not get lost.



The Remarkable Journey of Strawberry Island Boats Spreading the Word About FBW and the Plight of UK Waterways



Six boats from Strawberry Island Boating Club (SIBC) embarked on an extraordinary journey at the end of March, determined to raise awareness about the Future of British Waterways (FBW). Overcoming countless obstacles, these boats have travelled an impressive 600+ miles and navigated through 365 locks, undeterred by challenges such as broken locks and

closed tunnels. Their resilience, dedication and unwavering spirit have been evident throughout, as not once did they falter or contemplate giving up.

The crews aboard these boats have not only devoted substantial time but also significant financial resources to spread the message about FBW. Their initiative has been met with immense support and hospitality from AWCC (Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs) clubs across the UK, both large and small. These clubs have extended a warm welcome, offering invaluable help in various ways, such as providing transportation to local shops and railway stations. This collective spirit of camaraderie has underlined the shared passion for preserving the waterways.



As the boats prepare for the next leg of their journey - a

Page 14



crossing of the Wash—excitement and anticipation fill the air. For many, this will be a first-time experience, marking yet another milestone in their adventure. The group has now grown to 12 boats, with three additional vessels from SIBC and visitor boats joining the effort. Together, they head toward the Fens, determined to draw attention to the urgent need for funding on these waters and the Middle Levels.

The Fens waterways promise to present their own set of difficulties, with stoppages already flagged on the radar. However, the boat crews remain undaunted, ready to tackle

whatever lies ahead. Their journey is a testament to the importance of perseverance and the shared mission of advocating for the waterways' future.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to all the boats and their crews for their involvement, dedication, and tireless efforts. Their journey has not only highlighted the plight of UK waterways but has brought together a community passionate about making a difference. With determination and unity, it is hoped that their efforts will capture the attention of the Government and place the waterways' challenges firmly on the map.

This remarkable journey serves as a beacon for all who care about the preservation and future of Britain's beautiful and historically significant waterways. May their adventures inspire action, awareness and change.



Hazel Owen

What have the canals ever done for us?

A ditty by Ian Marr, FBW campaigner and Founding Fool

What have the canals ever done for us?

What about the aqueducts?

Well yes, the aqueducts. But what else have the canals ever done for us?

Transportation?

Well yes, clearly transportation and the aqueducts. But what else have the canals ever done for us?

Back bone of the Industrial Revolution?

I'll give you that, but other than being the backbone of the industrial revolution, transportation and the aqueducts, what else have the canals ever done for us?

Living heritage?

Well obviously, there's the living heritage, that goes without saying, and the backbone of the industrial revolution, transportation and the aqueducts. But what else have the canals ever done for us?

Access to nature?

Okay, so they have brought us access to nature, the living heritage, backbone of the industrial revolution, transportation and the aqueducts. But what else have the canals ever done for us?

Cycling, fishing, running and walking?

Goodness me, of course there's the cycling, fishing, running and walking and the access to nature, the living heritage, backbone of the industrial revolution, transportation and the aqueducts. But what else have the canals ever done for us?

Brought peace?

Oh. Peace? Shut up!

IWA Canalway Cavalcade 2025 and Westminster Adventure

It was our first ever visit to the Canalway Cavalcade, we stopped over for the bank holiday weekend on our way from Doncaster to the FBW campaign cruise which was to take place outside the Palace of Westminster on the 7th May.

I must say it was a weekend to remember and there was a relaxed carnival atmosphere. It was good to see so many boats, both pleasure boats like ours, together with historic narrowboats and working boats. Unfortunately, due to a recent fire at a substation above the Maida Hill Tunnel there was a number of boats that could not make it as they were stuck the wrong side of the tunnel closure (including 3 boats that had set out with us).

I am a big believer that you get more out of things if you are prepared to enter into the spirit and participate. With this in mind I set about 'dressing the boat' for the weekend. I had entered into the opening pageant of boats on the Saturday morning, the boat handling competition on the Sunday afternoon and the illuminated boat procession on the Sunday evening. We also dressed up for the weekend. The theme was boats past, present and future. We took the past option and with others from our party, dressed as war time Idle Women and boatmen of the era.



For the pageant of boats parade some friends of ours joined us on the boat and we set off going under the bridge into the pool at Little Venice. We soon found out that our 'dressed boat' was not fit for purpose in that with the bunting pole up we could not pass under the

bridge into the pool, so quickly it came down to get under and then went up again. Unfortunately, the cruise up the Paddington Arm had many more low bridges that required the said pole to be lowered and put back up again. Lesson learnt for the illuminated cruise on the Sunday night in the dark!

The next day it was the boat handling competition. As it was my first ever Cavalcade I was entered into the novice category which is restricted to first time entrants. My wife took these photos which she said, 'I had my concentration face on' I don't know what she means!



The course was to go around the island manoeuvring your boat past all the cavalcade entrants in the pool, come up to and nudge a buoy with your bow before reversing until your stern was under Warwick Avenue Bridge. You then had to go forward and bring your boat to a complete stop alongside the judges rostrum and shake the judge's hand, instructions were your boat had to be stationary in front of the judge and you would lose points if you or the judge had to move in order to do the hand shaking. The other bit of information provided to me was that the canal was 'live' so I had to be fully aware of other canal users on the day.

I set off from my starting point just before Harrow Bridge on the Paddington Arm and as I started to go under the bridge a pleasure boat came around the corner in front of me. Power off before I had even got started! The pleasure boat sounded three short blasts on his horn. He had seen me coming and was telling me he was in full astern, so I carried on at tick over until he had positioned himself out of my way. Unfortunately, he was now across the route I had been told to take around the Island. Slowly I passed the pleasure boat until his path was free to go under the bridge and get out of my way. It was now a very acute turn to get back on course around the island. Manoeuvre completed it was now a question of bringing the

bow up to and 'nudging' the buoy. It is then you realise how good your judgement is in respect of the length of your boat. Task completed all that remained for me to do was reverse up and under the Warwick Avenue Bridge (a little wind was not making my life easy) and then move up to the rostrum and shake the judge's hand. I went in to forward keeping the revs down...just then a 'large party boat', a very large leisure broad beam (complete with dance floor and people dancing on board) started to come from the other direction into my path. I brought my boat to a stop still outside of the pool and waited until he had completed his manoeuvre and was no longer in my way. Off we went again and came to a stop in front of the judge, shook his hand...job done!

After the excitement of the day we headed back to our mooring to prepare for the evening and the illuminated procession. Having learnt from the Saturday trip up the Paddington Arm I lowered my pole to get under the bridge into the pool then put it up again, went around the island in the pool in front of all the spectators, then elected not to go up the Paddington Arm but returned instead to my mooring and called it a night.

After a wonderful few days enjoying the Canalway Cavalcade at Little Venice we had to move on in order to reach our final destination of Westminster on the Wednesday. This was an amazing experience and involved twenty seven narrowboats.

It was an 8:00 a.m. start and we locked out of Limehouse in groups of four, down the Thames to the Palace of Westminster. We were the second group locked out which meant we arrived an hour before the due time to sound the horns. We therefore had to 'tread water' for nearly an hour. The Thames was very choppy, there were supporters on the bank with their banners too. At the appointed time a hell of a lot of noise was made which could be heard inside the building.

We had a police escort after the protest, and on the way back to Limehouse we spotted an Uber Clipper with what looked like VIPs on the back; there were TV cameras too. We then realised who the VIP was...it was King Charles! What a surprise to have His Majesty joining in!

Sorry your Highness for photobombing your media event.



Back off the tidal Thames at West India Dock, Canary Wharf was where we moored and the evening was spent having a hot debrief in a theatre bar (any excuse for 'survivor's tipples') followed by a survivor's supper at a local restaurant.

Some amazing days to remember.

Jo and Brian Sharples

Blue Star Surveys

Marine Surveyor and
Boat Safety Scheme Examiner

Mike Boulton

Tel: 01405-769129 or 07930-384143

Prompt and Professional Service



Web Site: www.bluestarsurveys.co.uk

Email: info@bluestarsurveys.co.uk



KYME EAU and RIVER SLEA TALES OF TRIAL, TORMENT and TRIUMPH

The names Kyme Eau and Slea can be traced back to Anglo Saxon, 'cyme ee' meaning 'the river that flows through Kyme, and in Old English 'sleow' meaning 'a slimy muddy stream'. Oh how apt.

Have you heard of the 'Silver Propeller' Challenge? This is a crazy trial set by the IWA to encourage watery folk to visit many of the nation's underused waterways and also be in with a chance of receiving IWA's Silver Propeller Challenge plaque. Woooooh Hooo!

For Brian on 'Thatsit' and Ian on 'Purple Emperor' the 'Silver Propeller' has been a persistent gnat, buzzing irritatingly around the tiller and dictating destinations of near impossibility. The boys, unable to deny the call of the Silver P, have risen to each challenge with great enthusiasm and varying degrees of success.

So, one warm sunny June morning, just before second breakfast, we set off at dawn to tackle the Kyme Eau where a mere 7.5 miles along the river the Silver Propeller destination lurked at Cobbler's Lock.

For the first half an hour progress was good. The boys chatted cheerily on their radios and all was well with the world. The wifely crews almost considered getting out of bed. Then things started to go pear shaped.

Like 'War of the Worlds' the green slimy prop clogging ectoplasm began to invade the ditch. At the speed of a three legged tortoise we arrived at the one and only lock. A beast of a creature with a huge guillotine gate and an exhausting rotating wheel to open it. The crew were ~~ordered, bribed,~~ begged to leave their beds and donned in Disney pyjamas, the girls set to work on the beast. Much hilarity bordering on hysteria occurred as the girls developed a technique of rotating the wheel at a specific speed that simultaneously rotated the unfettered boobies. Mickey Mouse jiggled like a bag of ferrets.

So, onwards we crawled, stopping every 4 minutes to hack pond weed from the prop, the sun blazed down and the hours dragged. With another 4 miles to go an increasingly livid Jo thrust Brian's lunch out of the galley, shrieking 'you wanted a challenge, try this, it's spaghetti bolognese and don't spill any down your top.' Not easy to eat when gripping the tiller and slurping spaghetti single handed.

Our Day on the Kyme Eau

By Jo Sharples (Thatsit)

Today was shit!!

The weather was hot and the 'boys' (Brian and Ian on Purple Emperor) had decided to do one of their Silver Propeller Challenges. The river Slea. Or known locally as Kyme Eau. Brian said that the Canal Planner app indicated that it would take just 5 1/2 hours there and back and that we should set off early to avoid the heat. So off we went at 8:00 AM. I was still in my pyjamas enjoying my breakfast in the bow when I discovered that we had arrived at a lock that needed doing. There was thick, green, slimy, weed around the lock which had a pungent stink to it. Brian got out to open the gates which looked as though they hadn't been opened in ages. At the other end of the lock there was a guillotine gate which had to be manually wound. Purple Emperor had entered the lock, and I realised Ally had not got out! I would have to work the lock myself. So in my flip flops and PJ'S I slowly closed the gates and started to wind the guillotine up. It took ages my sweatshirt had to come off I had no bra on, and it was hard work! Eventually the gate was up Ally came out to help wind down the guillotine gate.



The weed was like a carpet of green, smelly slime.

Page 24

Did we really have to go on this crazy mission? There were no views, nowhere to moor, the sun was intense, and the weed got wrapped around the propeller which meant B had to go into the weed hatch time and time again.

As we approached the village of South Kyme there were more challenges. A lot of overhanging branches and it was shallow and at some points very narrow. We grounded outside a property which had a stone terrace. B told me to get off to lessen the load on the stern deck. The homeowner came out and shouted, 'that's private property you know.'

Lunch time came and went, the skipper was not stopping, he wanted a challenge, so I give him one. I handed him a plate of spaghetti with tomato sauce. 'eat that' I said you wanted a challenge, and don't get it on your top!



After 7 miles of thick weed and then becoming stuck one more time, the skippers decided to give up half a mile from the end. The simple truth was that the bottom was too near the top we could go no further. Trouble was there was nowhere to wind. So we had to set off reversing!! We went for a couple of hours at least. B drank five pints of water as he wrestled with a barge pole to keep us out of the bulrushes. Eventually we reached a winding hole, and we could turn around. The going was a little easier when going forward! When we got back to South Kyme we all agreed enough was enough and we moored up for the night. Needless to say, we ladies were a little perplexed with the situation! Tomorrow is another day!



Footnote from the Skipper. It wasn't that bad, a little challenging agreed, but it wouldn't be worthy of a Silver Propeller if everyone went there. The challenge recognises that the last mile and a half could be subject to grounding at time of low water. As we have just had the driest spring on record it was that. So we did not fail in our task and the Silver Propeller is in the bag.

Brian Sharples

An Alternative View

By Duncan Wright

The phrase "I don't know what all the fuss is about" is a common idiom used to express that someone doesn't understand why there's so much excitement, concern, or attention being given to something. It suggests that the individual doesn't perceive the issue as significant or worthy of the fuss being made.

This can be applied to our visit to the Kyme Eau. Veni, Vidi, Vici.

Nuff said!



Editor's note – Not sure whether the before and after images tell the same tale. You're looking a little jaded Duncan and that's before you towed us back to the winding hole!

Page 26

BCF **WORD**

The quarterly magazine of the
**BOATERS' CHRISTIAN
FELLOWSHIP**
Issue 113 - Aug 2025

WITH NEWS AND VIEWS FROM



Fellowship • Worship • Witness

IWA Cavalcade 2025



Brian Sharples
Strawberry Island Cruising Club

It was our first ever visit to the Canalway Cavalcade and I must say it was a weekend to remember with a relaxed carnival atmosphere. It was good to see so many boats; both pleasure boats like ours and historic narrowboats, including working boats.

Unfortunately, due to a fire at the substation above the Maida Hill Tunnel, a number of boats could not make it as they were stuck the wrong side of the closure, including three boats that had set out with us from Strawberry Island Boat Club near Doncaster and had gone through the tunnel prior to the fire.

Saturday 3 May 2025

I am a big believer in the fact that you get more out of things if you are prepared to enter into the spirit and participate. With this in mind, I set about 'dressing the boat' for the weekend. We also 'dressed up' for the weekend. The theme was boats, past, present and future. We took the past option and, with others from our party, dressed as war time Idle Women and boatmen of the era.



Some friends of ours joined us for the pageant of boats parade on the Saturday morning and we set off towards the pool at Little Venice. We soon found out that our 'dressed boat' was not fit for purpose in that, with the bunting pole up, we could not pass under the bridge. It was rapidly taken down and then reassembled the other side. Unfortunately, the route up towards Paddington basin had many more low bridges that required the said pole to be lowered and put back up again. Lesson learned ready for the illuminated cruise on the Sunday night in the dark!!

Sunday 4 May 2025

The next day was the boat handling competition. I was entered into the novice category, which is restricted to first time entrants. My wife took a photo.



She said I had my concentration face on.....I don't know what she means!

The course was to go right around the island, come up to and nudge a buoy with your bow before reversing until your stern was under Warwick Avenue Bridge. You then had to go forward and bring your boat to a complete stop alongside the judges' rostrum and shake the judge's hand. Your boat had to be stationary in front of the judge, and you would lose points if you or the judge had to move in order to do the hand shaking. The other bit of information provided to me was that the canal was 'live' so I had to be fully aware of other canal users on the day.

I set off from my starting point just before Harrow Bridge on the Paddington Arm. As I started to go under the bridge, a pleasure boat came around the corner in front of me. Power off before I had even got going! The pleasure boat sounded three short blasts on his horn. He had seen me coming and was telling me he was in full astern, so I carried on at tick over until he had got out of my way. Unfortunately, he was now across the

route I had been told to take around the Island. So, slowly I passed the pleasure boat until his path was free to go under the bridge and get out of my way. It was now a very acute turn to get back on course around the island.

Manoeuvre completed, it was now a question of bringing the bow up to and 'nudging' the buoy. Task completed. I now had to reverse up and under the Warwick Avenue Bridge. The wind was not making my life easy. However, we got there. Now only one thing left to do; move up to the rostrum and shake the judge's hand. Into forward, keep the revs down... just then a 'party boat' - a very large broad beam complete with dance floor and people dancing on board, started to come from the other direction into my path. I brought my boat

to a stand-still and waited until he had completed his manoeuvre and was no longer in my way. Off we go again. I came to a stop in front of the judge, shook his hand...job done. [Editor - Brian got the class trophy for this, well done]

The Sunday night Illuminated Boat Parade was well attended by gongoozlers. Families lined the bridges and towpath areas. Having learned from the Saturday trip up the Paddington Arm, I lowered my pole to get under the bridge into the pool then put it up again, went around the island in the pool in front of all the spectators but elected not to go up the Paddington Arm. Instead, I returned to my mooring and called it a night.

Monday 5 May 2025

We left Cavalcade early for the FBW Campaign Cruise. All the lights and flags were dismantled and we set off around 10 am, as soon as the Maida Hill Tunnel was opened. Due to a gate failure at City Road lock, there had to be assisted passage. We queued patiently while CRT staff lead each boat through, bow hauling with ropes, only one boat at a time into the lock. It took us nearly three hours to get to the front of the queue and get through. We continued on to our overnight mooring, making a stop to remove a shopping trolley from a lock landing on route.

Tuesday 6 May 2025

No mad rush this morning, we only had three to four hours cruising to get to Limehouse. When we arrived, the fuel boat was moored up so we pulled alongside and filled our tanks with diesel ready for tomorrow. It was then time to walk the dog prior to attending a safety briefing on our trip along the tidal Thames the next day.

Wed 7 May 2025 – The BIG day. Fund Britain's Waterways Cruise, Destination: Palace of Westminster.

The plan was to set off from Limehouse and finish in West India Docks with a gathering of 27 narrowboats in front of the Palace of Westminster at approx 11am to sound horns in protest to the government's decline in funding to Britain's waterways.

It was an 8:00 am start. We were locking out of Limehouse lock in groups of four and we were the second group locked out, which meant we arrived an hour before the due time to sound the horns. We therefore had to 'tread water' for nearly an hour. The Thames was very choppy. There were supporters with banners on the bank. At the appointed time a hell of a lot of noise was made, which we are told could be heard from inside the building.

We had a police escort after the protest. On the way back to Limehouse, we spotted an Uber Clipper with what looked like VIP's on the back. There were TV cameras also. We then realised who the VIP was - it was King Charles! What a surprise to have His Majesty joining in!!

Back off the tidal Thames at West India Docks where we moored for the evening, we had a hot debrief in a theatre bar. Any excuse for 'survivors' tipples! This was followed by a survivor's supper at a local restaurant.

Fiona Burt adds her experience of the event:



'Cavalcade was a sociable time, as boaters converged on London from around the network. We hosted visits from the Macaulays & the Bells, and were delighted to be part of the Chaplaincy 'team' who led the second Sunday service. Mary and Richard Haines kindly joined us for the illuminated boat parade and, whilst the ladies donned light up angel wings, halo and waved their wands, the men wore LED gloves and threw glow-sticks to the children. Sadly, we did not win, but the windows of *Lutra* proclaimed 'Love, Joy, Peace & Boats 2025' and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.

The FBW Campaign Cruise was equally enjoyable, although a little more stressful as we'd never 'done the Tideway' before. Andrew Phaisey from SPCC gave a thorough briefing, issued laminated maps and emergency info, and reassured us that the authorities were fully aware of our plans. I was a little concerned when he told us that if we got something round the prop we couldn't open the weed hatch out there as the boat would easily be swamped. This is not a stretch of water to be taken lightly, even when the weather is perfect.



As one of the last boats to leave Limehouse, we played 'follow the leader' and enjoyed all the sights (Tower Bridge, the Tower of London, the Shard, St Paul's Cathedral, the London Eye, Big Ben...and finally, Westminster Palace). Toot, toot, toot. What a din!



The overnight in West India Docks was an added bonus. All the campaign cruise boats fitted in the lock together and one even wined in the chamber! It took a while for everyone to moor up, so a couple of us seized the opportunity to explore amongst the skyscrapers of Canary Wharf.'

John Serocold adds more detail to the bow hauling:

'The FBW Campaign Cruise on 7 May, showcased AWCC at its best with boats from (at least) Strawberry Island, the Ashby club and Hinckley, the Boaters Christian Fellowship and (inevitably) St Pancras CC. St Pancras also provided a few experienced crew members to travel with selected skippers. The new National Boating Manager for CRT, Alex Hennessey, also joined us.

On Bank Holiday Monday, I helped CRT staff bow haul 16 or 17 boats through City Road Lock (No 5) on the Regent's. The lock had been quite badly damaged early the previous week. Without their efforts the Campaign cruise boats would have been thin on the ground. Half a dozen boats went round by Brentford and down to the Thames Barrier.'