

Captain Slog

Friday 30th March 2007

It's good to be back!

The Beestie is looking good although not very clean on the outside, very dull brasses and very little coal (we had interlopers on the boat during the previous week). The crew will be busy.

Slow departure from Stockton Top. The gas bottles needed investigating by Guy – Guy knew all about it, Guy would sort it out. Unfortunately none of the 'helpers' seemed willing to find him. Once identified and approached, you find out why. Cockston Pott has been invaded by the ghost of Basil Fawlty.

A cold northerly followed us down through Calcutt and a mooring at Napton – the same location as November. We are creatures of habit.

Stove on, temperature rising, pasta cooking, life is good.

Saturday 31st March 2007

A slow start.

Braunston for lunch, water and coal – 2 bags from the cheerful chappie at the Marina who spent three years on the Regents Canal waterbus following retirement – just the job.

Up the north Oxford for the first time in the afternoon. Some observations:

- Braunston is not so attractive from the north thanks to a sprawling hillside estate with too many conservatories;
- Bridge 81 at Barby must surely collapse before too long;
- Some of it is broad and straight and some contoured and narrow – I must read up on the route of the old Oxford;
- The Thai Restaurant advertised on Bridge 72 is now the *Bengal Exotica Cuisine* (or similar) – fancy name for a standard curry house;
- Best moorings in this area are just above Hillmorton Locks;
- Mobile phone works a treat, satellite reception non-existent.

Why do I have such trouble “tuning” in the DVD? Otherwise life remains good.

PS – started cleaning the brasses – tiller, oil filler cap and two air vents – plenty still to go!

Sunday 1st April 2007

Descended Hillmorton Locks – uneventful except for closed towpath and closed alternating locks. Good to be back on narrow locks again – much more sociable and easier to work with a crew of two.

Arrive at Newbold on Avon for lunch and met up with relations at Barley Mow. Friendly staff, reasonable food and moderate cost.

Newbold Tunnel looks impressive with theatrical lighting, this should be done elsewhere.

Headed for Ansty in the constant company of Virgin trains. Ansty was full so eventually moored all alone east of Bridge 11 – far enough from the Motorways not to hear the traffic.

Monday 2nd April 2007

A gentle cruise down to Sutton Stop which looked magnificent in warm bright spring sunshine. And then a change of plan – instead of heading for the Ashby, we turned left to Coventry.

An interesting trip through a post industrial landscape, including the Ricoh Stadium. The Sky Blues Wall of Fame is a very short piece of masonry but still found room for Jimmy Hill!

And so the Canal Basin – the best thing in Coventry and well worth negotiating the shallows, winos and suspect looking youths.

Spent the afternoon in the city centre. The Cathedral has not improved since it was first forced on me during a school trip in 1964. At least it is entirely in keeping with the rest of the city centre although I am not sure that what Sir Basil intended.

Tuesday 3rd April 2007

Departed Coventry Canal Basin around 10:30 having filled the water tank and done some more brass.

There was something lurking beneath Bridge 2 – large and solid - I cut the engine before it reached the prop. And then, we collected something at Bridge 4 which created the wake of a speedboat combined with the progress of a snail.

Off with the weed hatch and hands into the murky waters to grip something flexible and vaguely woolly – an old pullover – could have been much worse! The joys of urban cruising.

The lights do come on at Bridge 6 but you have to be very observant – they may be better at night but who would want to be there.

Lunch at Hawkesbury Junction where we gave the impression of filling up with water just above the stop lock. Then non-stop back to Newbold and The Barley Mow for dinner.

Wednesday 4th April 2007

Uneventful day compared with the 3rd.

Temperatures rising, clouds cleared by 16:00, very spring-like. Finished the brass, cleaned the decks, paintwork needs some coloured Simoniz (or similar) to remove surface scratches. Cleaned windows, baby-wiped upholstery.

Work on Hillmorton locks nearing completion – it is going to look very smart. Enterprising youngsters were working the middle lock – they earned their pound.

Lunch at the top of the flight then moored for the night north of Braunston at Bridge 85. Walked to The Rose at Willoughby – curry night – we couldn't resist. Nice country pub.

Thursday 5th April 2007

What a fantastic day!

Woke to the reflection of dappled water on the ceiling, rising temperatures and sun all day.

Meandered into Braunston for water and lunch. Strolled around the marina and took a shine to a £118K tug boat – not very practical for the price but then neither is a Lotus Exige and I want one of those too!.

Final leg to STLM in bright bright sunshine.

Cleaned up the boat – externally much improved from when we picked it up but still not perfect. Stove laid – too warm to light.

Moored next to the fuel and pump out so no excuses for a quick turnaround.

A wonderful day and the Masters on the telly – Life is Good.

Have a good week who ever has the boat next – sorry, we should know but forgot to check.

Robin and Pam.