

Captain Slog

Saturday 22nd September 2007

It's good to be back – the boat is looking excellent. Arrived at 13:30 – 4 fours from Hexham. The Marina was quiet so plenty of room to move the boat near the car and load up. Much to be said for a Saturday pick up.

Meandered down to our usual first night stop at Napton Junction.

Walked to The Kings Head south of Bridge 109. Very, very quiet – at £5+ for a cider and tomato juice, no wonder.

Sunday 23rd September 2007

Dull day turning to drizzle late in the afternoon.

Dawdled to the bottom of the Napton flight to collect papers and fill the water tank.

What is the Christadelphian Church? There is an outpost in Napton village.

A chat with the shop owners next to the Folly Inn confirmed that the farmer on Napton Hill has been the subject of various council orders, all to no avail (see November 2006).

Lots of traffic heading down Napton flight which made life for us going south.

Very quiet all the way to Fenny Compton. More reasonably priced drinks at the Wharf Inn but what a strange mixture of interior décor – where is the House Doctor.

A very very windy night – something went bump, yet to discover what.

Monday 24th September 2007

Woke to an autumnal world rinsed clean by torrential rain. Everything now bright and shining from a sun lower in the sky.

No damage after a night of ten “tornadoes” hit the Midlands. The coolie hat was adrift from the chimney but saved from drowning by the chains – well done Nigel.

A leisurely uneventful cruise down to Cropredy – very busy, must be hell in high season. Moored well south and walked back to the Brasenose Arms. Food very good and reasonably priced. The Red Lion looked stuffy and expensive to avoided its jaws.

Tuesday 25th September 2007

No progress today, visiting my Mum in Stoke Manderville hospital – thankfully looks like being a relatively short stay.

Back to the Brasenose for more of the same + the taxi service (my sister).

Wednesday 26th September 2007

Lazy trip to Banbury in the company of Nomad and Jura.

The plethora of waterpoints (according to Nicholson) were hard to spot – filled above the lock in the short pound between the lift bridge and the bus station – many gongoozlers.

The moorings in town looked excellent (as did the shops for some of the crew) so, not to be defeated, we turned and came back to moor above Tooley's Yard. What would LTC Rolt make of all this.

Thursday 27th September 2007

Quite a hard day in a cold north easterly from Banbury to Lower Heyford. The last three locks were quite hard going for the crew (Pam) – very large single bottom gates demand a high intake of Weetabix.

Lower Heyford very attractive and the Bell Inn excellent – a really lively village pub not struggling for custom. Much like a imagine the Bull at Ambridge.

This is about as far as we go otherwise it turns into hard work. The intention had been to reach Oxford but we have lost time and need to return by Wednesday PM. The obsessive trainspotter in me will regret not doing these last few miles in years to come. We will just have to come back.

Friday 28th September 2007

The turning point south of Bridge 207 is as far as we go.

Heading north into wind and drenching rain it was not the best of days.

On such days Somerton Deep Lock is funereal. As the bottom gates close it would only take some bowed heads around the lock side to complete the impression of being buried alive, complete with your boat – how cheerful.

The rain continued to Aynho Wharf where we packed it in for the day. We set out for the village but gave up in the glare of fast cars and spray. Instead we dripped into the Great Western Arms. We sensed that we were not the clientele they were hoping for. A pub with pretensions to be a restaurant, it succeeds at neither.

The fish chips and mushy peas were ‘ok’ with overwhelming portions – at £9.75 that would once have bought the entire catch.

Saturday 29th September 2007

The sun is up, the sky is blue, there’s not a cloud to spoil the view.....well, not many. Diesel and coal from Aynho Wharf, and then off to Banbury, our fourth time through the town on this trip alone.

Moored next to Castle Quay again. Only two boats on the entire 24 hour mooring which looked ominous – did they know something we didn’t about Banbury on a Saturday night.

Bought some replacement chain links at Tooley’s Yard to repair the front fender.

We went to see Atonement at the Banbury Odeon – excellent, at last James McAvoy in a convincing role.

The night passed without incident.

Sunday 30th September 2007

Another fine warm day – the only problem is that the clock speeds up on such days.

This holiday is passing too quickly!

A slow paced day from Banbury to Cropredy, this time mooring above Cropredy Lock – much more pleasant and less crowded than the southbound mooring.

The crews cleaned all the brass today. Engine checks have been fine all week although the tick over can be uneven when warm. Also noted that the rev counter is not returning to zero when the engine is switched off, has it always done this?

Evening walk around the village, down to Bridge and back up the towpath – a very English place complete with Folk Rock addicts who came in 1979 and never went home e.g. NB ‘Meet on the Ledge’.

Monday 1st October 2007

Autumn arrived with a bump(s) in the night – acorns falling on the roof, surprisingly noisy in the small hours.

Another wet day whilst the NE basked in October sunshine, oh how pleased we were to hear that!

Cropredy to Fenny Compton and the Wharf Inn – two large screen TVs within yards of each other, tuned to different stations, why would you do that.

Walked to the Fenny Compton ‘8 till Late’ store – cut through the Marina to shorten what is mostly an uninspiring walk.

Tuesday 2nd October 2007

And so back to The Folly Inn, last visited in November 2006 when the bottom lock was closed and the pub even quieter. Home made pies, home made chips – excellent, but then everything tastes better after a day in the fresh air. As I remember from camping days, even Smash and Baked Beans can taste exquisite.

Plagued by hire boats on the way down Napton Flight, some of them fairly clueless but nice people, so what can you say.

Moored safely at Napton and we were ‘attacked’ by Johnny Foreigner (Dutch I think) mooring behind us – they obviously believe canal cruising is a contact sport.

And so to bed – last night glums.

Wednesday 3rd October 2007

2 x pump out completed, diesel filled and water up to the brim. Valet booked and cheque left for Barbara Payne. No problems the entire trip, running well, even the uneven tick over seems to have gone.

Brass done again but don’t expect results to last if/when it next rains. Windows cleaned, decks swabbed – difficult/impossible on one side now we are moored uptight with Cotonwood.

All electrics off, goodbye until 2008, it has been fantastic.