

# Serendipity Travels

## Log of the *Trudi*

The first three days.

### 22 June 2013

Before arriving at the marina, we visit the Sainsbury's supermarket in Banbury. Meredith buys a goodly quantity of essentials for breakfast, the occasional lunch, and a few dinners should we fail to find a place to eat. Then we have lunch at King's Head Pub, in Napton.



We arrive at Wigrams Turn Marina at 13:00 (as we had been advised to do yesterday). We are informed that the vessel originally assigned to us, the *Amber*, is out of service and that we will instead be on the *Trudi*. She is a slightly larger vessel, with two double berths, and will suit us quite well. *Amber* is a Duchess 2 [berth], 52' in length; *Trudi* is a Duchess 4, 58' in length.

A few links of interest:

- [Black Prince, from whom we hired \(chartered\) the boat](#)
- [The Black Prince base at Napton](#)
- [Wigrams Turn Marina](#)
- [Duchess 2 and Duchess 4 boats](#)
- [Google Maps View](#) of the marina

We are given time to load the vessel and park our car in the designated area whilst the marina crew are dispatching other boats. Although the arrival time is stated as 14:30, upon our arrival at 13:00 it appeared as though most other charterers were on hand and well into their preparations.

*To see more pictures of the first three days cruising, overlaid on a map, click: [England Canal Trip 2013, Map I](#)*

Our checkout skipper is named Law (short for Lawrence). He goes over the ship's systems in a very thorough and understandable manner, repeating when asked. Once we, and he, are satisfied, we are turned over to one of the engineers who will maneuver the vessel to the marina entrance.

There is a stiff breeze blowing (enough to give us pause if we were in Bellingham). The engineer deftly, but forcefully, departs the bulkhead and turns us 90 degrees toward the exit. The wind at this point is on our port beam and we are quite happy to let him have the helm until we are clear of the other boats.

The entrance is narrow, with low concrete bulkheads on either side. He sets the boat up for a "touch and go," asks if we are ready to take over, and hops off. Our course is straight across the waterway onto the Grand Union Canal, and we are off! In England, cars drive on the left, but boats on the right. Novice skippers, however, tend to drive all over the channel for the first hour or so.

Steering a 58 foot boat with a tiller and small engine is challenging at best. That crosswind, which will be on our port beam all day, adds to the experience. At one point, we were pinned to the canal side (on our starboard) for a few hundred feet before we were able to maneuver into the channel.

Less than a mile from the marina, we encounter the [Calcutt Locks](#), a series of three with about 100 yards between them. We observe the crew locking up (towards us) to refresh our memories of how such things work. Once the other boats clear, Steve returns to *Trudi* and drive her in while Meredith commences her duties:



1. Close both gates behind the vessel.
2. Crank open a sluice paddle by the gates at the front of the vessel. (Opening one of the two paddles is sufficient and less effort than opening them both.)
3. When the water on either side of the gates at the front of the vessel is equalized, open the front gates.
4. Crank closed the sluice paddles.
5. Unless another boat going in the opposite direction is present, close the lock gates.
6. Reboard the boat, or walk to the next lock.

The process is the same, whether you are locking up or locking down.

We proceed along the canal another two miles, stopping for the evening just short of the [Birdingbury Wharf Bridge](#). We see our intended dinner venue, The Boat Inn, on the banks of the canal, about 300 yards away.

After a bit of time to relax, we hike to the Inn. Imagine our disappointment to discover that the Inn is closed, and appears to have been out of business for quite some time.

Sadly, we trudge back to the boat. We find some solace in a couple of glasses of wine, and then Meredith heats a tin of stew. A bit more wine, some reading, and we are off to bed.

### 23 June 2013

It is cool and cloudy when we awake, not unlike an early summer day in the Pacific Northwest. Our plan is to descend ten locks in the morning, lunch at one of the two pubs by Cuttle Bridge in Long Itchington, and then another ten locks in the afternoon will take us through Royal Leamington Spa into the suburb of Myton. There are pubs on either side of the Myton Bridge.

We seem to be the first boat on the waterway this morning, and most of the locks are prepared for boats coming up (we, at this point, are going down). This adds to Meredith's work; she must do four steps before Steve can drive the boat in:

1. Close the *far* lock gates. (We were later to learn that proper protocol is to leave all gates closed when exiting a lock, but that is not always done.)
2. Open the sluice paddles closest to the vessel, which will change the water level to the height of the vessel.
3. Open the *near* lock gates. Drive the vessel into the lock.
4. Close the paddles opened in 2.
5. Then, as before, close both gates behind the vessel once it is in the lock.
6. Crank open the sluice paddles by the gates at the front of the vessel.
7. When the water on either side of the gates at the front of the vessel is equalized, open the front gates.



8. Crank closed the sluice paddles.
9. Unless another boat going in the opposite direction is present, close the lock gates.
10. Reboard the boat, or walk to the next lock.

Thus, about double the work. At a few of the locks this morning we do meet an oncoming vessel and the first four steps have been accomplished by the other crew.

As the morning goes along, we become more adept at our locking duties. Meredith has her system down, and Steve is able to fit the boat in – sometimes even entering through a single open gate, with 2" clearance on either side.

It takes about 2½ hours to traverse the 10 locks and 1½ miles between Birdingbury Wharf Bridge (#21) and [Cuttle Bridge](#) (#25). Our spirits are immediately raised as Meredith notes activity in The Two Boats Inn, where we have moored for the moment.



At noon, we enter the pub to find a barkeep. She would happily serve us a draught or two, but they have not yet started their food service for the season. Fortunately, the Cuttle, across the bridge, is open for lunch. After excellent meals of chicken and lamb roast, accompanied of course by the local real ale, we are once again off.

At our first lock, we join up with some experienced English cruisers. He reminds me of Gene Den Hartog, a very nice, well-grounded gentleman with a wealth of experience to share. He and his wife, in the space of four locks, teach us much about locking procedure. He would always leave the boat and help his wife with gates and paddles, carefully tying the boat while the water level changes, and using the ladder in the lock to reboard at the proper time.

As we moved between the locks (about 200'), we motored in tandem. It must have been quite a sight to see two 50+ foot vessels moving together as if rafted. After the fourth lock, they bid us adieu and we continued by ourselves for the remainder of the afternoon.

Our weather this afternoon varied substantially. At times sunny, always breezy (though not as bad as yesterday), and with several sudden rain showers – a few of



which were proper downpours. Rain jacket on, rain jacket off, repeat. A few times, Meredith was caught in the open, without her jacket, when the rain began.

The last six locks of the day were uneventful. Depending on the situation, Steve was able to alight from the boat and help Meredith with some of the locking steps, although never as capable as the gentleman from our previous experience.

Beyond the last lock, we motored 2½ miles through Royal Leamington Spa. At times, we were in an isolated waterway, at times through a residential area, and at times in an industrial area.

We found a mooring in front of The Moorings, a gastropub at [Bridge #43](#). We were able to tie our stern to a mooring ring, but had to drive our mooring stakes through hard-packed sand for a bow line and spring line. As the wind blew most of the evening, we were concerned about those stakes, but they held all night.

Dinner at The Moorings was another excellent experience. The British seemed to have learned how to prepare a fine meal at a reasonable (but not cheap) price. A couple of real ales complemented the food. We retired to our boat and spent the rest of the evening relaxing, and drying our clothes.

## 24 June 2013

This morning finds another cloudy day, with some breeze. Our plan is to cruise in the morning, traversing two locks and about 3½ miles (at 15 minutes per lock and 2 miles per hour, it will take us most of the morning).

Our morning proceeds as planned. We cruise along through the suburban towns between Royal Leamington Spa and Warwick, enjoying the wildlife (primarily waterfowl) along the canal and the glimpses of modern English life. There are several boatyards and seemingly permanent moorings along this route.

As we approach the locks, we meet up with another boat that we have been following all morning. We traverse the locks together. This is another English couple, retired, who have sold their house and now live aboard their narrow boat. Living aboard would be a bit cozy for us, but seems to be working for them.

Turning the corner at Budbrooke



Junction, just past [Bridge #51](#), we spot an ideal mooring place. Parts of the canal have concrete edges and parts have metal edges. The metal are easy to moor to if you have the proper “hooks” that slide between the vertical siding and horizontal rub rail sections. This area has the metal, and we are quickly made fast to the shore.

With our boat firmly secured to the mooring and locked against any intruders, we head off towards Warwick Castle. Our first stop is the Saltisford Canal Centre. This sits on a short section of the canal that used to join our canal at the junction. It contains moorings, a small chandlery, and a most helpful proprietor. We purchase what will be one of the best prizes of the trip, a metal plaque for the Warwickshire Ring. Said plaque will occupy a place of honor on *Serendipity*, next to the one from the Kennet and Avon Canal.

We walk into the town center, and find a nice place to eat lunch. The Thomas Lloyd is part of the Wetherspoon chain – a group of nice licensed restaurants built in buildings that once served other purposes.

After lunch, it is a short hike to [Warwick Castle](#), where we spend most of the afternoon. The castle is in quite good shape and full of interesting exhibits. It is also a bit of a tourist site, with plenty of things to occupy the kids and scare the adults. We opted for the general admission ticket, which gives one entry to the castle and grounds, but not the special areas like the dungeon.

After walking through the great hall and attached rooms – full of medieval weapons, paintings, tapestries, and furnishings – we stroll the grounds. We are just a bit early for the main tourism season in Britain, so the gardeners were busily bringing the Peacock Garden (full of males of the species) into shape.



To see more pictures of  
Warwick, overlaid on a  
map, click: [Warwick,  
England 2013](#)

We watched the Birds of Prey demonstration, wherein a falconer and his assistants brought a horned owl, a bald eagle, and a stellar eagle. These are all rescue birds (the bald eagle from a forest fire in Canada) that have been trained. All showed their skills as raptors – swooping down from castle

parapets to retrieve bits of food – accompanied by entertaining banter from the presenter.

Afterwards, we had an ice cream in the coach house before exiting the castle grounds. There is a lovely garden at the end of Mill Street, where one has views of the castle and the River Avon. From there, we observed the launch of a fire ball from the castle's trebuchet, quite a sight as you might imagine.

Our walk back from the castle and Mill Garden went by the Lord Leycester Hospital and into the Kings Head, a pub. After refreshment at the pub, we walked a bit farther to The Black Horse Inn for dinner, and sat with a most interesting man who is now a motorcycle instructor and bee keeper, but in the past has worked in IT and banking.

Back to the boat after eight hours of exploring, we read a bit and then retired for the evening. The 21 Hatton locks await in the morning.