

Serendipity Travels

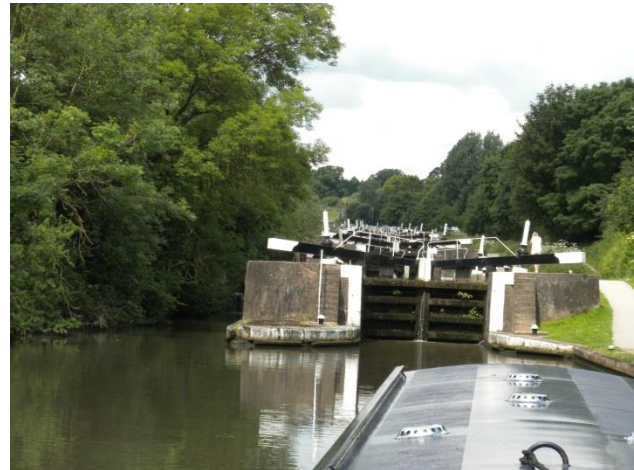
Log of the *Trudi*

Days four – six.

25 June 2013

The original plan had been to spend another day moored in Warwick, taking a bus to Stratford-upon-Avon. Since we visited the town by car before getting on the boat, we decided to move on this morning.

Some call the [Hatton Flight of Canal Locks](#) “The Stairway to Heaven.” Those who actually work the locks might have a different name. The 21 locks lift the canal level 144 feet in 2½ miles. The distance from the exit of one lock to the next averages 500', although at times it is about half of that. We were fortunate to meet up again with David and Maria, the folks who went through the Calcutt Locks with us yesterday. It is much



easier to go through locks with another sharing the work. There are also a few volunteers who help with the work, communicating about oncoming boats and helping with the paddles and gates. We think there were four on the flight today.

Our progress up the flight was fairly constant, with a few breaks waiting for an oncoming boat to clear. Fellow travelers are generally helpful and patient, although one boat following us, with some young adults, wasn't particularly either. Meredith and Maria were both much more adept (and stronger) at the locking process, and David and Steve at driving the boats, than that lot. Total time to traverse the locks

To see more pictures of days four-six of cruising, overlaid on a map, click: [England Canal Trip 2013, Map II](#)

was about 4 hours – 12 minutes per lock.

Once clear of the last lock, we hiked back about a half mile to the Hatton Arms. This restaurant sits on a hillside overlooking the

flight of locks and Warwick. The castle and cathedral are visible in the distance. We enjoyed a lunch with David and Maria, before bidding them adieu. Their course will take them to Kingswood, thence down the Stratford Canal to Stratford-upon-Avon.



Once we returned to the boat, we relaxed for an hour or so. Setting off, we met some traffic as we traversed the rural area. A mile and a half up the canal, we went through the [Shrewley Tunnel](#), a 433 yard bore under the town of Shrewley. Beyond the tunnel, the journey was uneventful, other than one very distressing event.

Rounding a corner to the right, we met another boat. We each moved to the proper side for passing. That put us on the inside of the turn, where shoaling can occur. Once past the other boat, we felt a slight change in momentum. A moment later, Meredith said “I think you are hitting bottom.” Quickly cutting engine power wasn’t quickly enough. The bow was well and firmly grounded, lifting the boat about six inches and giving it a slight list to port.

Putting the engine in reverse did not move us off the grounding. Something else would be necessary. All boats carry a sturdy pole about 10 feet long and 2 inches in diameter. One is tempted to put the pole in the water, against the canal bottom, and push. Steve tried pushing the stern, to no avail. Same with the bow. Would we be stuck until help came?

We decided to try a different approach. Steve put the end of the pole in the water, slightly under the boat near the stern, and then pulled back on it, using the pole like a lever. At the same time, Meredith ran the engine in forward and put the tiller to the left, so the stern would move away from the bank in the same direction Steve was applying force. Slowly the stern started to move toward the center of the channel and deeper water.

After several resets of the pole, we were able to get the stern free, with the boat about 45 degrees across the waterway. Steve went to the bow and tried to lever that, but with no success. Back at the stern, we used forward gear and tiller hard over, first right then left then back again a few times, to try to free the bow. When we thought we saw some movement up forward, we put the engine in reverse, gave it full power, and were able to free ourselves. Hooray!

The remainder of our cruise was uneventful. We found a nice mooring in Kingswood, just short of [Bridge #65](#), made fast the boat, and had a glass of wine to celebrate. There is a lovely restaurant named The Navigation at Bridge #65, where we had another excellent meal washed down by a few ales.

Back to the boat, a bit of relaxing, and off to bed. The adventures continue tomorrow.

26 June 2013

Before leaving in the morning, we took a short hike around the Kingswood area. Kingswood is the junction between the Stratford-on-Avon Canal and the Grand Union Canal. There was quite a bit of moorage there, and we caught our first glimpse of single-wide locks. Starting tomorrow, most of the locks we encounter will hold only one boat.

We found a small store and stocked up on milk and other drinkable items. Returning to the boat, we set off. There are several pubs and farmhouses alongside the canal at this point. A pleasant, scenic start to our cruising day.

The Knowle Locks are a flight of five. As seems to be our fate on this trip, they were all set in the wrong direction, so Meredith had to empty them before Steve could enter, then fill them for the boat to exit. She reported that many of the paddle mechanisms were quite stiff – it is fortunate that there were only five. Once above the locks, we stopped by Bridge #71 and hiked into the town of Knowle for lunch.

[Knowle](#) is a picturesque small village, far enough from Birmingham to be its own



town. The houses are well maintained, and many appear to have been here for centuries. The village church is also attractive. After lunch at Loch Fyne, we returned to the boat.

Three miles beyond Knowle is the town of Catherine De Barnes. We moored just beyond [Bridge #78](#). The Boat Inn welcomed us for dinner. Afterwards we retreated to the boat, knowing that the next day would be a bit more strenuous.

27 June 2013

Today we will skirt the western edge of Birmingham, avoiding the center of the city. The trip will include 11 or 14 locks and about 13 miles of canal – at least 9 hours.

The first seven miles are uneventful. We see increasing signs of industrial Birmingham, passing power plants, factories, industrial supply companies, and even a rock-crushing operation (dusty!). The canal waters show more signs of urbanization, lots of trash is floating by. We even spot an overstuffed chair that somehow found its way into the canal!

After passing several factories that once made use of the canal for transport, but are now bricked up, we enter the Camp Hill Locks. There is a lot of trash floating in these locks. Progress is slow, but we make it through.

Leaving the sixth lock, about to turn to starboard at [Bordesley Junction](#), Steve notices the boat is very unresponsive. He cannot turn to either port or starboard, forward is very slow, reverse not much better. And the motor is vibrating much more than usual and making a sound we have never heard before. The wind is adding to the difficulty.

With a lot of backing and filling, having much more control in reverse than in forward, we are finally able to secure the boat to a tree. Canal boats have a “weed hatch” that allows one to reach down to the propeller and free it of weeds or other debris that might be there. Suspecting that we might have picked up something in that last lock, Steve opens the hatch.

Canal water is so murky that we cannot see the prop. Reaching down, Steve feels fabric and starts pulling. First thing removed is a part of someones t-shirt. The next grab gets some plastic. Then the real culprit is felt. Something soft and bulky ... pulling and pulling, it comes loose – it is a hoodie sweatshirt! No wonder the boat would not go well with that wrapped around the prop.



With the sweatshirt out of the way, Steve reaches in feeling for more. A few weeds, some more plastic, and a bit of plastic strapping material are removed. With all that gone, the boat should run better.

Hoping that there has been no damage to the drive train, we start the boat again. To get back on track, we will have to re-enter the junction and turn 180 degrees. Happily the boat responds quite well and we are soon back on course.

We had hoped to replenish our water supply at a watering point just north of the junction. We figure out how to do all the steps (connect the hose, open the water fill cap, unlock the covering hatch so one can reach the valve, and turn the valve), but no water comes out. After looking all over the device for some secret that we are missing, we finally give up and take off again.

Just ahead are the five Garrison Locks. We meet some British Waterways workers at the first, and they tell us how to use the lock key (first time we have needed one). They also tell us that the watering point we tried to use is out of service, but there is one ahead at Minworth.

A steady rain starts to fall as we progress through the five locks, but fortunately there are no serious problems. In one, a board wedged itself against the bow of the boat, preventing me from leaving, but a quick whack with the boat pole sent it on its way.

Our next point of interest is [Salford Junction](#). Here, we must turn 135 degrees to starboard to enter the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal. It takes quite a bit of backing and filling, since the open area is only slightly longer than our boat. We eventually make it though, and are on the final stretch of our day's journey.



Three more miles finds us at Tyburn Bridge and a nice place to moor for the evening. Adjacent to the bridge is the Tyburn House. After drying ourselves off and celebrating today's accomplishments – 11 locks and 13.5 miles, plus drama with the debris – we have a rum and coke to relax. And another. Then we walk to Tyburn House and have the mixed grill (enough meat for four meals) and a couple of ales.

Tomorrow will be a less ambitious day.