

Serendipity Travels

Log of the Trudi

Days seven – eleven.

28 June 2013

We awake this morning to a bit of breeze and drizzle, and immediately put aside any thoughts of going into Birmingham for sight-seeing. Instead we will look for that water point, traverse three locks, and hope one of the pubs in Minworth has free Wi-Fi.

The [Minworth Top Lock](#) is only a few hundred yards from our mooring. There is a rubbish disposal point above the lock, which we use. Once through the lock, we tie up to the watering point and take on water. We had gone a bit too many days before filling – our water pump was spitting air this morning.



It takes a while to fill the tank, but eventually we are full. Casting off, we go through the next two locks and tie up just past Caters Bridge. The Boat pub is nearby, and we hike there looking for lunch. Sadly, his kitchen is “in a bit of a refit at the moment” and he cannot serve food. However, he recommends The Hare and Hounds which is a (brisk) five minute walk up the canal.

We follow the towpath to the restaurant, which is indeed open for lunch. They have a unique concept – two meals for £10 – meals that individually are priced from £6-8. Their beer and ale are reasonably priced as well, most are about £2.60. Oh, and free

Wi-Fi!

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

Following lunch, we resolve to return in the afternoon with computer and iPad. We also notice some nice mooring rings adjacent to the restaurant, and decide to move the boat the

half mile from where it is. Once moved and secured, I decide to check the weed hatch again. No hoodies this time, but there are a few plastic bags and other bits of junk – souvenirs of our passage by Birmingham. That done, I work on assembling groups of pictures to upload to Facebook.

Late afternoon, we go back up to The Hare and Hounds, order a couple of pints, and log onto the internet. By the time we have checked our email, uploaded pictures, and checked bank balances, it is dinner time. We order dinner and another round of pints. Another tasty meal. Satisfied in many ways, we head back to the boat for the remainder of the evening.

29 June 2013

Today's itinerary will have us traverse the remainder of the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal, heading north northeast much of the time. There are 11 Curdworth Locks to descend, with a pub between locks 8 and 9.

After about a mile we encounter the [Curdworth Tunnel](#), which is only 57 yards long – seemingly more like a bridge than a tunnel. We make it through the first eight locks without incident. The nature of the boat traffic is such that almost all of them are set the wrong way, doubling Meredith's work.



Just above Lock 9, we find the Dog and Doublet, a nice canal-side pub with a full menu. Fortified by a steak and kidney pie and an ale, we are ready to continue the day's trip.

After traversing the final three locks, we drive the final three miles to [Fazeley Junction](#). Cross winds and more junk on the prop frustrate my first attempt at mooring and we end up on the wrong side of the canal. Once more into the weed hatch and I emerge with a couple of handfuls of plastic sheeting. With a clean prop, I'm able to make the intended mooring and we are secure for the evening. Our journey of 7.5 miles and 11 locks is over by 15:30.

We had hoped that Fazeley, being the site of a canal junction, would have an assortment of interesting shops. Sadly, that is not the case. We drop into a couple of pubs, but both are having some sort of Saturday afternoon event – and noisy.

Our third choice, The Three Horseshoes, is more accommodating. We have a couple of pints and chat with the locals. A few are wearing some sort of jersey – turns out today was a big rugby match between England and Australia and the local lads lost. We wished them better on the rematch next week. We ask for a dinner suggestion and the unanimous choice is the Peninsular, a Cantonese restaurant only a block away.

It was too early for dinner, so we walked through a bit of the town on the way back to the boat. We have a glass of wine, read, and chat with another boater. Eventually we make it to the Peninsular and have some tasty Szechuan dishes. Back to the boat, and off to bed after some reading.

30 June 2013

We leave our mooring and immediately enter Fazeley Junction. This is easier to negotiate than the one at Salford, and we make the 80 degree turn without incident. We are now on the Coventry Canal. We soon leave the industrial buildings of Fazeley and are cruising through a residential area. There is an unusual ticking sound as we motor, which changes in frequency as we accelerate.

Arriving at the [Glascote Locks](#), of which there are two, we see that there is a line of boats waiting to go up. We are fifth in line, so I shut off the engine and inspect the weed hatch. This time, there are only weeds. But one of them is pretty sturdy, perhaps a willow branch, and the likely cause of the sound. With all that removed, we continue to move up the queue.

When we are second in line, Meredith goes ahead to help the boat in front of us (which seems to be protocol in such situations). Our turn comes, and we are in and out with little problem. Exiting the first lock, we meet a boat coming the other way, which means the second lock will be prepared for us. While in the second lock, we look at the row of townhouses adjacent. There are eight cars in the parking area; four of them are BMW's and two Mercedes. Nice neighborhood.

Once through the lock, it is four miles to our intended lunch stop at Polesworth. It is a nice sunny Sunday morning, and there is more traffic than we are used to on this stretch of canal. Several boats moored on the side, a cross wind, and the canal itself is fairly narrow.

*To see more pictures of days
nine-eleven of cruising, overlaid
on a map, click: [England Canal
Trip 2013, Map IV](#)*

At one point, an oncoming boat, a moored boat, and we are all banging each other. Metal hulls and slow speeds minimize the damage, but it is an uncomfortable situation. No one yells, no

one swears, we just keep calm and carry on. The narrow winding canal, with even narrower bridges, means there is a lot of work to be done with the tiller and throttle. We achieve our goal of Polesworth and moor for lunch.

As has been the case in almost every town we have been in, there is some sort of weekend festival going on. We walk into town and find a nice pub, The Red Lion, and have lunch there. Afterwards, we walk through a bit of the town, including the cemetery by the Parish Church. Some of the tombstones are from the 1700's, others as recent as this decade.



We stop at a Spar market and replenish some basic supplies – bread, milk, crackers, and wine. After our walk, we are back at the boat and cast off for the afternoon's run to Atherstone.

There are eleven locks in Atherstone. We accomplish six of them and find a nice mooring by [Bridge #43](#). The Kings Head Pub is within 100 yards (yes, that is the third place with that name we have encountered on this trip). After a suitable pause to relax and refresh, we walk up to the pub. Unfortunately, they only serve lunch on Sundays, and we are directed into town. We stop in a few more places, with the same result.

Finally, we stop in the Red Lion Inn (no relation to the place where we had lunch). There the receptionist/barkeep/waitress is happy to serve us and we have the most fantastic burgers for dinner.

In addition to the food, we have an interesting conversation with her. She is from Poland and is married to an Indian (East Indian, we presume). Her English is superb, and she tells us she loves listening to the various accents of her visitors. She especially likes the Southern drawl, which she imitates reasonably well, and hopes to visit Alabama someday just to hear the people speak.

With that thought in mind, we head back to the boat and are soon in bed, looking forward to tomorrow's adventure.

1 July 2013

Our first task this morning is the five remaining Atherstone locks. They are bunched together, with the first one about 100 yards beyond our mooring. We are able to proceed quickly through them as there are both volunteers and oncoming traffic.

One of the more interesting things we see on the canal this morning is a pair of work boats – one with a motor that is towing the second, non-motorized. The rear one has a tiller and person steering it, but the whole combination must be quite a challenge at some of the curves. We meet one pair as we exit the last lock and another later on the waterway.

Our route is through farmland this morning. We see the farm buildings off in the distance, but none are close to the canal. We pass the BW Hartshill yard, a major maintenance depot for the waterways. According to our guidebook, it is “picturesque,” and would have been except for the large dumpster sitting in the middle. Apparently some remodeling is being done.

We stop at the [Anchor Bridge, #29](#), and have lunch in the Anchor Inn. Lunch is quite filling. Afterwards, we are rather drowsy and a short nap is necessary before we continue.

Feeling refreshed, we set off, intending to cover about 8 miles. The maximum speed I’ve been able to achieve is about 3.25 miles per hour – the boat might go a bit faster but 3.25 is enough. When passing moored boats or meeting other boats and in congested or restricted areas, we slow to 2 mph or less. We expect the trip to take most of four hours.

There are many quarries along the route, but the canal side vegetation hides them from our view. We skim the edge of Nuneaton, which seems to be a fairly large and modern town. The parts we see are not particularly quaint.

Beyond Nuneaton we pass Marston Junction, where one could begin a trip on the Ashby Canal. Instead, we continue on the Coventry Canal and see the beginnings of the suburbs of Coventry. Our goal of Hawkesbury Junction is achieved, and we first stop to refill our water tank.



Tank filled, we find a mooring spot near [Bridge #11](#). We head over The Greyhound for dinner. This is a very picturesque place, a bit pricy, and it fills quickly at dinner time. We have some seemingly non-pub type food, fajitas for Meredith and lasagna for me – washed down, of course, by some ale.

Back to the boat, some reading and laundry, and off to bed. Lady Godiva awaits us tomorrow.

2 July 2013

The path from Hawkesbury Junction into Coventry is lined with artwork, primarily sculptures and benches with artistic designs. Sadly, the taggers have added their own embellishments and much of it is not worthy of photographs.

Apart from the art, the route is interesting as it winds into Coventry, a major industrial center. There are industrial estates on both sides of the canal, some involved in manufacturing (a pallet manufacturer is very prominent), some in salvaging (a scrap metal yard), and some in distribution (a large Ricoh facility). The housing estates we pass are of a more modest class than the ones on the other side of the junction.



There is a lot of debris in the canal as well. Many plastic bags and pop bottles. Those, combined with the vegetation that encroaches both sides of the canal at places, meant that another visit to the weed hatch was inevitable as we made our way into town.

The canal has many blind corners, often coupled with bridges. Talking to other boaters, we learn that one boat hit a shopping trolley (cart) and did damage to their rudder mechanism. Another grounded on the way in. Our trip was less exciting as we met very little on-coming traffic. Seems as though most people go *in* to Coventry in the morning and come *out* in the afternoon. That was our plan as well.

On the way into town, we pass “[Cash’s Hundred Houses](#)” (of which only 48 were built and 37 remain). The concept was quite clever, build a row of houses, the first two floors are individual family living areas, and the top floor is a large open area

with looms. Power to the looms comes from a single shaft running the length, driven by a large steam engine.

The [Canal Basin](#) is very close to the center of Coventry and we were able to find a mooring spot there. As we walked into town, we encountered the Tudor Rose, a classic pub on a corner. How could we resist? After lunch and an ale, we continued our way into the center of town.

One night in November, 1940 the German Luftwaffe was tasked with the destruction of the industrial center of Coventry. Bombs were not as accurate then, and some of them fell on [St. Michael's Cathedral](#). When the dust cleared, the tower was still standing, as were most of the outer walls. But the ceiling was gone. The remains still stand, a somber reminder of the destruction that can be wrought by war.

The new cathedral stands adjacent. From a distance, the two spires appear to be part of the same church (one thinks of the Cologne Cathedral). It is only when you get close that you notice the separation.



Leaving the cathedral area, we walk into a modern retail area. The stores are similar to what we see in the U.S. There is, however, a statue of Lady Godiva – appropriately dressed. Earlier, Meredith pointed out a shop named “Godiva Tailors,” which seems to be an oxymoron.

We return to the boat and leave the center of town. The return trip to Hawkesbury Junction is without incident and we tie up only a few yards from where we spent last night. We take the computer and iPad into The Greyhound (same one as last night) to do some picture uploading over a pint.

While there, we notice David and Patsy, another couple that we have chatted with on the towpaths, and invite them to join us at our table for dinner. A great conversation ensues as we learn about Cornwall (our destination once we are off the boat) and other bits of information about England and English life.

Finally, we return to the boat and settle in for the evening. Tomorrow, we plan to cover many miles.