

# Serendipity Travels

## Log of the *Trudi*

The last four days.

### 3 July 2013

Today, like virtually every other day on this trip, dawns with cloud cover, a cool breeze, and the threat of rain. One does not come to the British Isles for the weather.

Leaving our mooring, we make two 90 degree turns to enter the lock that separates the Coventry Canal from the North Oxford Canal. The difference in water level is only about one foot, so the lock transit is easy.

The trip from Hawkesbury Junction (a.k.a. Sutton Stop) is uneventful for many miles. There are several boats moored along the canal in various places, and quite a bit of opposing traffic. I think I'll reject my "Sunday Traffic" hypothesis – it seems the Coventry and Oxford Canals are just busier than the Grand Union Canal was.

The first eleven miles of the journey are through gently rolling countryside. The villages in this area are some distance from the canal. We pass several marinas – it seems as though it would be easy to find a place to moor ones boat in this part of England.



Meredith tries her hand at driving and does quite well. On one straight, wide, and deserted stretch, Steve pushes the throttle down to see just how fast the boat can go. According to the GPS, we get up to 3.9 mph. There is more left in the throttle, but at that speed the boat feels a bit uneasy so he quickly backs off. 3.25 seems to be the maximum, and that is often reduced by congestion, turns,

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

bridges, or narrowing of the canal – sometimes all four of those at once!

The 250 yard [Newbold Tunnel](#) precedes the town of Newbold on Avon. We find a place to stop just past the tunnel and moor up for lunch at the Barley Mow. After lunch, we walk into the village and find a store at which we can replenish our wine supply.



We return to the boat and begin our journey around the outskirts of Rugby. The canal is far enough from the town that it does not have the usual urban junk in it. We arrive at the [Hillmorton Locks](#) and are surprised to find three pairs of locks – the only time in our journey that we have seen adjacent operational locks.

We transit the locks with two young couples from Germany in the adjacent lock. They are more than willing to help Meredith with her tasks, which makes the passage of these, our *final*, locks go quickly.

Once clear of the locks, we motor one more mile to [Bridge #73](#), where we find The Old Royal Oak, a canal-side pub that will serve as our dinner place. The Canal Shop is also here, and we plan to visit it in the morning.

It is been a busy, but productive day as we motored over 14 miles and traversed four locks. We have two more cruising days to complete the final 12 miles to the start and end point of our journey – Wigrams Turn Marina in Napton.

#### 4 July 2013

We inquire at The Canal Shop if their laundry facilities are available, and learn that we can indeed do our laundry there. After almost two weeks of “sink laundry,” we welcome the opportunity. The cost is £4 per load (about \$6), and each load will take about 60 minutes, so we divide the pile into two parts and commence.

The shop is small, but serves both the needs of the boater and the tourist. One can purchase line (rope), electrical switches, books, decorative plates, and many other things. We make a few purchases while the first load is in progress and Meredith takes them back to the boat (about a ¼ mile walk by the time you go down one side

of the canal, cross, and walk back). She returns about the time the first load is complete.

After starting the second load, I take the first batch back to the boat and hang it up to dry. We could have used their dryer, at £3 per hour, but we want to get going as soon as possible once the second batch is done. Most of our clothing is the quick-dry style (brands like Ex-Officio, Mountain Hardwear, and REI), so we expect it will be dry by the time our day's cruising is complete.

We leave Hillmorton about noon. Our destination for the day is [Braunston](#), which has been a major canal centre for over 200 years. There are several boat building and maintaining companies here and one of our fellow travelers said it is *the* hub of narrowboat activity in the entire country.

The previous weekend (29-30 June), Braunston hosted a working-boat rendezvous. Some of the boats are still in town (we saw a steam-powered boat from 1909 go chugging by) and the mooring spots are rather full. After deftly maneuvering our boat through the crowd, including one spot where boats were moored on both sides of a curve and I had no more than a foot on either side, we make the turn back onto the Grand Union Canal and point the boat towards Napton.



We find a spot to moor a few hundred yards past the turn and stake the boat in place for the evening. We hike back into town and have appetizers as a late lunch at The Millhouse. After lunch, we explore the town, visiting two different chandleries and the very large Braunston Boat Haven.

Exploring done, we return to the boat for some R&R before dinner. We return to The Millhouse for dinner, this time with computer and iPad so we can upload pictures and check our email. Afterwards, once again back to the boat and we settle in for the night. Tomorrow, we must begin the process of packing up and cleaning up.

## 5 July 2013

We are at least a half day ahead of our schedule, so there is no urgency this morning. Every day, including this one, begins with heating water for the instant

coffee. Then Steve sits at the computer writing the previous day's journal. Meredith is usually up soon after, and we have a leisurely breakfast before any serious undertakings.

Today we have a serious decision to make. We are ½ day motoring from our ending point (Wigrams Turn Marina), which we must reach by 09:30 tomorrow (6 July). Our car is there, waiting patiently for our return. We could arrive at the marina this afternoon and use the car to get to pubs for lunch and dinner.

There is a pub less than one mile beyond the marina on the waterway, adjacent to a winding hole. We could take the boat there for lunch, turn it, and then return to the marina either later in the afternoon or the next morning.

We decide to try for the pub on the waterway. There is a lot of opposing traffic between Braunston and Napton; we meet at least a dozen boats. The waterway is wide, but most of the bridges are on turns. That, of course, is where we meet the other boats. No incidents happen, however, and we moor just short of [Bridge #111](#) and go into The Bridge at Napton pub for lunch.

We are quite pleased with the quality of the meal and the service, and decide to return for dinner. Since traffic seems to have abated for the moment, we decide to attempt the winding hole. Meredith photographs while Steve drives. Once turned – about six minutes total time – we tie up in the same spot and set about packing our bags.



## 6 July 2013

For the first morning in a long time, we set an alarm. Sleeping in a canal boat is so peaceful that we have been known to slumber for ten hours or more! We awake before the alarm however, and have our last breakfast on-board. After some last-minute packing, we set off to the marina.

To reach our marina, we must pass the Napton Marina, another large establishment that caters to hire boats. There is plenty of traffic, but we manage to pass and approach our home base. More traffic at the junction which is at our marina entrance, but everyone is patient enough and we enter the marina and dock about 08:30.



The marina staff are very helpful and quite fast. In less than 30 minutes, they have refueled the boat and checked us in. Our fuel bill comes to \$213 – not bad for about 100 hours running time (and paying European prices for fuel). One last check of the boat for forgotten items, and then we are off in our car – destination the Southwest of England.

