A narrowboat is positioned on a canal, viewed from a perspective looking down its length. The boat's deck is green and features two large solar panels in the foreground. A red lifebuoy is mounted on the deck. The canal is flanked by a high, textured stone wall on the left and a dense line of trees on the right. The scene is framed by a stone archway at the top. The text is overlaid on the image in a stylized, glowing font.

**ADVENTURES**

**2016**

**by**

**WRT**

**and**

**Magda M.W. Wensing**

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## FROM THE EDITOR

In Holland, going to Grammar School in the seventies usually meant visiting Rome. So did I in 1973. One of our duties was to write a travel journal. This was the start of the numerous travel journals I wrote over the years.

So when the word 'narrowboat' entered my vocabulary I immediately realised: this is going to be a journey as well (but not as we know it). I kept track of everything narrowboat-related after that. And when I finally moved to the UK I decided to keep a weblog. Primary for myself, but also for 'the folks back home'.

Reading a weblog on a day-to-day basis is one thing, but reading all posts about one subject in one go is very awkward. Reading it as a pdf or as an e-book is a lot easier.

This document contains all the posts of our adventures in 2016.

Not included is all that happened during the time WRT spent in a shed at Swanley Bridge Marina. She wrote about this herself, in *Extreme Make-over*.

If this book is unreadable on your e-reader, please tell me, and I will try to correct it.

Enjoy reading.

Magda Wensing



## IF YOU'RE GOING TO SAN FRANCISCO... – 03 JANUARY 2016

No, I didn't wear some flowers in my hair, but other than that, I certainly looked right. So did Lawrance, with his Blue Suede Shoes.



60s couple

This is how we ended 2015: Back to the 60s. And although we were at the same party, Lawrance definitely went to another time than I did.



*Don't you step on my blue suede shoes*

But it was fun. We danced, had some drinks, mingled with other people from the 60's.



Lady and hippie

And there were presents from a Secret Santa. I surprised someone with 'Needles and Pins'.



Needles and pins

Other than last year, WRT had no reason to complain; we were back at the boat just after one o'clock. I won't mention that we left her the next day for a (short?!) visit to Lynne and Norman on Ladybird. As a thank you Ladybird will soon be invaded by... ladybirds.



Ladybirds

At the moment we're definitely California dreamin' (*All the leaves are gone, and the sky is grey*). Christmas lights are still Blowin' In The Wind. But I Feel Fine.

On Tuesday I will give my first course in crochet.

The Times They Are A'Changin'.

## FAIR FA'YOUR HONEST, SONSIE FACE, GREAT CHIEFTAIN O'THE PUDDIN-RACE! – 25-01-2016

I know, I can clearly see all the question marks that are popping up. Don't worry, I will explain. And yes, I had a wee nip, but I just did the dishes, and nothing got broken.

So what is the above sentence? It's the beginning of **Address To a Haggis**, a poem written by the Scottish poet Robert Burns. He wrote this poem to celebrate his appreciation of the haggis\*. It's a bit like Joost van den Vondel\* writing a poem about rookworst\*.



Haggis, cut with sgian-dubh

And why all this? Because it's Burns Night, a night to celebrate the life and works of the national Bard. National bard of Scotland, of course. So for me it was my first Burns Supper (and, don't laugh, for Lawrance as well). We had Haggis, Neeps (Scottish for swede or rutabaga (koolraap) and Tatties (Scottish for potatoes). Well, what else could we eat?



Haggis, Neeps and Tatties

Unfortunately we didn't have a Piper to pipe in the guests (one: because we didn't have guests, and two: because I could not find the CD with Scottish Pipe music), so the Haggis didn't get piped either (**STOP** your dirty minds **NOW**, you Dutch people!).

But afterwards I expressed our longing for Scotland by playing Flower of Scotland on ~~my~~ the Anglo-concertina. Wearing socks, knitted by Ann, a Scottish lady living on a boat just a couple of jetties from us.



Longing for Scotland

Maybe, one day, I should create a **Vondel Night**. Serve Boerenkoolstamppot met Rookworst, recite Den Gulden Winckel der Konstlievende Nederlanders, and play the Driekusman on the melodeon...

\***Haggis** – a savoury pudding containing sheep's pluck (heart, liver and lungs); minced with onion, oatmeal, suet, spices, and salt, mixed with stock, traditionally encased in the animal's stomach

\***Joost van den Vondel** (1587 – 1679) – the most prominent Dutch poet, writer and playwright of the 17th century

\***Rookworst** – the Dutch version of Mattessons smoked sausage

\***Anglo-concertina** – No, it's not MY Anglo-concertina. It's Ian's, our neighbour. He bought it, thinking: It only has 20 buttons, must be easy to learn...

## HERE COMES THE SUN – 08 FEBRUARY 2016

No, we didn't move the boat to the Sahara. I mean our new solar panels. Free electricity, what could be better for a frugal Scottish man and an even more frugal Dutch woman?



Our new solar panels

Of course, we paid for the panels, and I calculated it will take us 3500 days (more than 9.5 years) in the marina to just break even. But it will be a great help while we're cruising.

To find out how great, I took off shore power, last weekend. Which meant: no 240 V. So no TV, and no hot water. Luckily Lawrance was away for four days, and he's the one who watches TV, or rinses his teacup with hot water, before putting another teabag in.

So at 11 o'clock on the Saturday morning it was batteries only. And yes, the panels kept the batteries full. Not that there was a lot of sun... And the forecast certainly wasn't good. The barometer was very low, and around 4 o'clock we got hit by the umpteenth storm.



Storm

I checked the battery monitor every hour or so, and the daylight managed to keep the batteries between 12.8 V and 13.3 V. And hot water for dishes and coffee? Heated by the stove!

Of course I could only use the computer for a limited amount of time, without 240 V.

So on the Sunday I decided to switch the inverter on, and see how the batteries would be doing. While charging my computer and my e-reader at the same time. That did take a fair amount out of the batteries, so after two hours I switched the inverter off.

All this will be different while we're cruising, though. The engine will provide the hot water, and our engine-mounted generator will give us 240 V to charge every phone, e-reader and computer as long as we're on the move.

So far I'm confident that we will manage.

## **SHE'S TOO BUSY (AGAIN) – 10 FEBRUARY 2016 – BYWRT**

So she finally found time to write...

It will be me, then, to fill in the gaps, because (as per usual) she's gone straight back to her crocheting.

Crochet was also the main subject on the fifth of January. Five women, I counted (well, six, if you include Magda), visited me to have a crochet day. Can you imagine, six women?



A serious activity for some...



...and fun for others

I felt more like a hen house, and I definitely needed my ear plugs. But apparently it was a great success, and I have to face even more women on the 19th of February (O, dear me).

I should have asked them to crochet a woolly hat for me, because a week later I was surrounded by ice for the first time this year.



*Brrr, cold*

It didn't last long, though. Since then we must have had an entire alphabet of storms. I'm just loosing count.

During one of these storms Lawrance and Magda went away for their yearly wassail dinner. She showed me some pictures of the apples, apple blossom and apple bunting she crocheted.



*Crocheted apples, and apple bunting*



*Apple blossom in January*

And a picture of her menu choice: pheasant pie. It didn't look too pretty to me, but Magda assured me: it was absolutely delicious. Not that she had anything to compare it with. It was the first time she ever had pheasant.



Pheasant Pie

And the latest news?

She started the War of the Roses...!

And now I'll stop writing as well. No, I'm not starting to crochet. But it is sunny, for the first time in ages, so I'm going to top up both my tan and my batteries!

## YOU KNOW WHAT WE FORGOT? – 15 FEBRUARY 2016

It's a beautiful Sunday. It's sunny, and the marina is as calm as a mill pond. Lawrance has just finished his breakfast, and is doing this, that and the other.

He serviced the engine, a couple of days ago, and after that we had a diesel leak. We did get a new diesel pipe, but we're not sure if it is still leaking a bit. So when he starts the engine I'm not worried. I just keep crocheting. But all the sudden I hear the boat getting into gear, and WRT starts moving.

Now I'm absolutely terrified. Trying to move the boat with the mooring lines still on? What does he think he's doing?

### **Taking me out for a Valentine's Meal!**

On hindsight I do remember seeing him on the front of the boat. But at breakfast we discussed an alteration to the lid of the gas locker, so I did think nothing of it. And never heard him taking the TV aerial down, and get the mooring line off.

So that's us, on our first cruise of 2016. All the way to the New Scarisbrick Arms Restaurant. It is a bit cold, but sunny; our solar panels are working fine.

We have a very nice meal at the restaurant, but when we go back to the boat we feel it: it's f\*\*\*\*\*g cold. Time to put some more coal on the fire, and empty the ash pan.

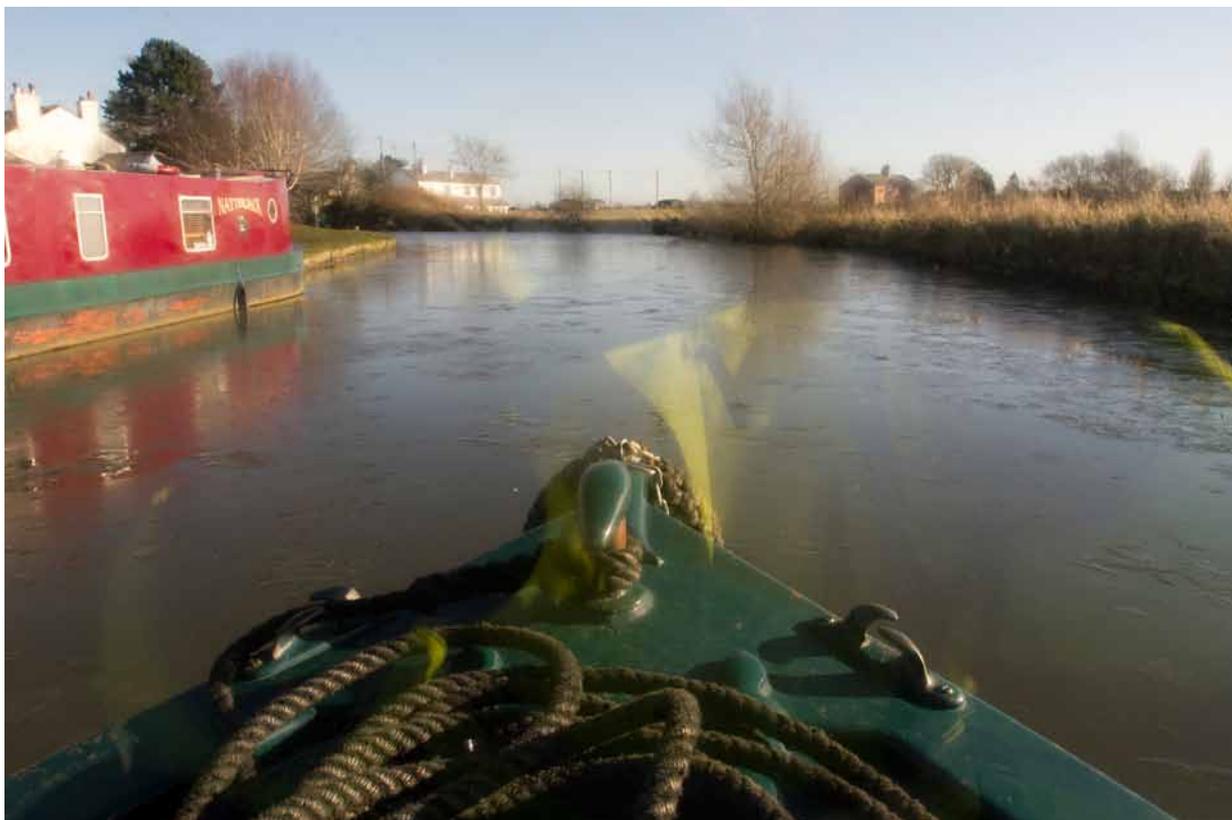
Empty the ash pan into...? That should go: *into the ash bucket*. And where is the ash bucket? On the jetty in the marina!

So we end up very carefully carrying the hot ashes (in the ash pan) via the well deck to outside the boat. Did I say we...? No, Lawrance. Because I'm wearing a skirt, and I'm scared to death to trip and sending the hot ashes flying all over the boat.



When I get up, the next morning, it is absolute freezing. It's only 18°C inside, and outside everything is white. It's still sunny, though, so I don't have to worry about our batteries (when Lawrance wakes up, and I can check the batteries, they are on 13.7V and rising, great!). It's also a bit windy, but nothing to worry about. The only thing I am a bit worried about is our fridge. It has miraculously defrosted itself (again). Not that I can do anything about it...

So after breakfast we set off, back to the marina. Suddenly the ripples in the canal disappear, and we hear a very strange sound: **we're going through ice!**



Breaking the ice

Yes, I know, cruising through ice should be avoided. Ice acts as sandpaper, and takes the blackening off (less work for Willow Boat Painting then). Not only from our boat, but also from the boats we pass. And I know that, if the ice is really thick, it might damage a Tupperware boat. And it certainly damages your ears, as I find out when I walk through the boat to get my camera. What a noise!

Luckily the ice is not thick, and we don't have any problems in bends. Carefully we pass two more places we're the canal is frozen. After that it's the usual Lancashire weather: bloody windy. Therefore I won't dwell on how Lawrance got WRT back, next to **our own** ash bucket...

\***Ash pan** – aslade

## EVERYTHING, EXCEPT THUNDERSTORMS – 06 MARCH 2016

That's basically a good summary of the weather we had over the last ten days. And I can even be a bit more precise: the first day it was nice, sunny weather and then the next day was horrible. Followed by another sunny day, and another horrible day. I could just CTRL-C and CTRL-V this last sentence.

A pattern emerges, which (surprisingly) coincides with the person on the tiller.  
Sunny day? Slight breeze? It's Lawrance's day on the tiller?  
Snowstorm? Gale force winds? Ice rain? Minus 20 degrees? My day on the tiller.

The only time I'm on the tiller in bright sunshine is when I take WRT through the tunnels (Lawrance is useless in tunnels). And even then there is a slight unfairness: there is no sun in the tunnels, Preston Brook tunnel has at least two showers, while Saltersford tunnel and Barnton tunnel are not dry either.



Let's get painted

To be honest, the first three days were not too bad. We leave Scarisbrick Marina on Friday the 26th, around noon. A bit late, but the weather is fine and we make it all the way to Crooke. Thanks to a voluntary lock keeper, who's locks (Wigan Flight) are closed for maintenance, and he wants to keep up his skills.

The second day we stop at Pennington Flash. Ann and Mick of Rorah are moored there, and after an in-house meal the discussion about what to do tomorrow takes four hours and four bottles of wine...



Pennington Flash

The reason for the discussion is the stoppage just before Worsley. There are signs all over: Canal Closed; and the Bridgewater Canal website has no more information either.



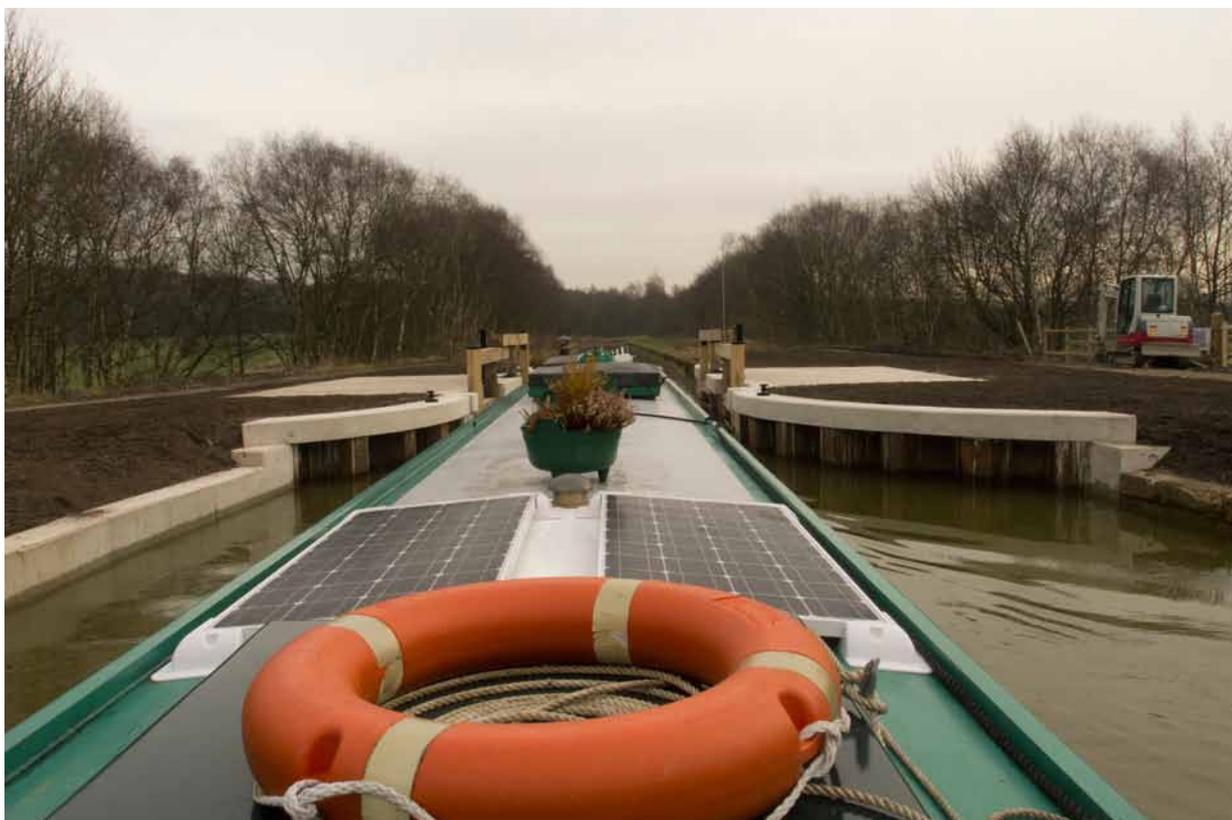
Misleading

So we stop at Leigh to do some shoppings at Aldi (wine...?) and stop for the day at Boothtown Marina. We're getting information that the canal is open, but can't be bothered.



And how to get to the other side?

On the Monday it's my day again. It's cold, and the canal is partly frozen, as you can see on the picture of the safety gates (left of the boat).



Safety Gates

The canal indeed is open and we make Lymm without any problems. Except for the fact that, by then, I'm frozen to the bone. I can't put on more clothes, I feel like a Michelin man already, with a thermal under-shirt, thermal Long Johns, jeans, a poloshirt, a jumper, a fleece, and my high-vis waterproof jacket that also has a fleece.

The next day it's pouring down with rain. This is not logic: it's Lawrance's day on the tiller. Ann and Mick decide to stay in Lymm for now, Lawrance has to brave the elements. But as soon as we're on our way the weather realises it's mistake. The rain stops, and the sun comes out. We find out today that with leaving Lymm around the full hour one can 'sail' through all three tunnels without having to stop. Ann and Mick do the same, but an hour later. We end up in Anderton, and have an excellent meal in the Stanley Arms.

Wednesday it's me again. Same amount of clothes, but instead of my high-vis jacket I wear Lawrance's waterproof fisherman's jacket. That should be warmer. Between Wincham Warff and Broken Cross I see a white thing, in the air in front of me. I think: snow? Nae, that can't be right. Well, ten minutes later I consider mooring up: I cannot see the canal anymore because of the snow! Luckily, after an hour or so, the snow stops... and the winds starts. No, not a slight breeze, gale force wind. WRT is doing fine, but I nearly get blown off the boat!

We have a break at Middlewich to buy a new Ecofan. The old one fell off the stove: Lawrance opened a ground paddle of Wardle lock in a oner, doesn't keep an eye on the boat, and me and WRT get launched. Even in reverse, and with full throttle, I can't do a thing to prevent it: we crash into the lock door. Luckily all other stuff stays inside the cupboards...

And it is not over yet. Just before Stanthorne lock I have to moor. I can't go on, it hurts too much: ice rain. The 'rain' cuts into the skin of my face, and when it gets in my eyes...!

When this ice rain stops I only have to negotiate a couple of bridge with the sun right in my face (and reflecting on the water) before we get to Church Minshull. Except for a bit too much mud on the towpath this mooring is fine. We walk to the Badger Inn for an absolute delicious meal, and the owner of the pub takes us back to the boat in his car. Brilliant!

On Thursday the 3rd I see my first Kingfisher, a good start of the day. The weather makes the same mistake as last Tuesday, and again realises it after half an hour. But it makes Ann and Mick stay for a while. We do the final stretch to Swanley Bridge Marina. Go through the smallest lock on the canal (Hurleston no.4) and moor up in the marina, right in front of the office.



At Swanley Bridge Marina

WE MADE IT!

We've done 84 miles, 5¼ furlongs, with 21 locks, five swing bridges and one lift bridge.



SBM to SBM

Ann and Mick are still in walking distance. They're in Nantwich, and when Lawrance is on his way (in an Enterprise rental car) to Scarisbrick Marina to get our own car, Ann finds out that it is a 30 minutes walk to visit me.

We spoke to Sally, the painter, made decisions about colours, and on Tuesday the 8th WRT will be taken out off the water.

I haven't told her yet...

I f@\$%#\*g KNEW IT ! – 08 MARCH 2016 – by WRT

I f@\$%#\*g knew it!

Something was wrong. How many people start their annual cruise in the middle of winter? How many cruising boats did I meet?



Happily cruising down the Bridgewater Canal

We're happily cruising down the Leeds & Liverpool, Bridgewater canal, Trent & Mersey, to the Shropshire Union. At Hurleston Junction we turn onto the Llangollen. Been there before. Like it. And meeting Linda, from Cheshire Cat, whom I know from my time in Overwater Marina, is a good omen, I think. Especially because SHE DID REMEMBER ME!

But then it happens: we turn into Swanley Bridge Marina. First I thought: maybe for fuel? Or water? Or laundry? No, we moor up...

Strange...

We don't move for five days, but there are all kinds of strange people visiting me, looking at me, and at various parts of me.

Strange...



Moored for five days

Then the following happens. They strip me almost naked.



Almost naked

And inside I get all kinds of covers.



Internal covering

Then Lawrance starts the engine and steers me into a dead end part of the marina. I can but close my eyes and pray. It all goes so fast, I don't even have time to decide which part of the Perkins engine I'm gonna use to break down.

When I'm slowed down I open one eye... and see the trailer.

I'M TAKEN OUT!



Leaving the water

Oh, no. The last time I was out of the water was in April 2014, when I got examined by this guy Magda hired to look at me... When I was sold...

THEY ARE SELLING ME!

Oh, it's happening again. I really thought they loved me. My engine room just done up, all the things Magda is crocheting for me. I just can't believe this. What do I do wrong?



Where am I going?

But after my bottom had a shower, Magda comes up to me, with a big smile, and says: "WRT, old girl, you are going to get a complete make-over! You'll be looking even better than when you were brand new. And every boat will envy you. You will look so shiny... It will take about four weeks. And don't worry, we are just around the corner, in a caravan. If you shout I'll probably hear you. And I will visit you every day to see how you are doing and to cuddle you if need be."



Bottom showered



Do I fit?

Phew.

And here I am. In a shed, bottom clean, waiting for things to come. I should have known...



My new home for four weeks

I will write about these things to come in *Extreme Make-Over*.

## SWANLEY HOUSE? – 14 MARCH 2016

And what about Lawrance and me? Well, while WRT is getting a complete make-over, we have temporary accommodation in a caravan.

For a month we will live in a space the size of our saloon plus dinette. With a 40 litre fresh water tank, a grey water tank we have to empty every so often, a cassette toilet with a tank for flushing we have to fill every so often. And “every so often” means: at the most inconvenient moment. Just when you want to make tea in the morning you run out of fresh water. And when you empty the sink after doing the dishes, the grey water tank will be full, and suddenly there is rice all around the caravan. No, I won't mention the moment the toilet flush tank is empty.

Telephone signal is bad, as is the TV, and we don't have wifi. And the worst thing? No solid fuel stove. In fact, basically no heating at all, except for our small electric bathroom heater.



*Temporary home*

But we have a beautiful garden, and a nice drive way. And if it wasn't for some trees, we could see the shed WRT is in.



Temporary garden



Temporary driveway

So far we spent our time visiting WRT, and going out for dinner with Ann and Mick, who got stuck once again because one of the locks of the Audlem Flight was closed for maintenance.



Guess who got the double portion?

Except for the second day (when it was raining, and grey) we've had sunny days so far. And freezing cold nights as well.

Only three more weeks to go...

## **PAINT SCRAPING – 16 APRIL 2016**

Yes, we're on our way. Hurricane force winds...  
I decide to forfeit my day on the tiller.

Lawrance reverses out of the jetty... and immediately goes diagonally towards the slipway, at great speed. He manages to reverse and to line us up with the exit, but then the wind catches us again and throws us straight into a boat that's fuelling up. We also hit both sides of the exit.

After that it's a piece of cake. We turn WRT's head towards the Hurleston Locks and, with the repaired rudder, she reacts very quickly.

We're not looking forward to the Hurleston Locks. They are narrow, to say the least. The first three are kind of OK, but the fourth one is horrible small. It takes off a fair amount of paint.

It also has lock doors that close themselves. By the time you've opened the second door you have to walk back to the first door and open it again. In the mean time the second closes itself, etc. etc. etc. Luckily there is a woman, walking her dog, and she keeps one of the doors open.

We stop at Nantwich Canal Centre to top up with coal and breakfast, and to show our freshly painted boat to Julie. She knows WRT from the time they were moored in Overwater Marina.

Hack Green Locks turn out to have a fairly big by-wash. The locks take off some paint, and one of the new fender hooks. We manage to save the fender, though.

We pass Overwater Marina. We planned to stop there and show our freshly painted boat, but it's late already, so we decide to keep going. But we are spotted, Dave waves from inside the building, and Colin (on his way home) waves as well.

The first three locks of the Audlem Flight also have a fair bywash. Here we lose our second fender hook (and again manage to save the fender). I know, we shouldn't have fenders on in the locks, but we want to protect our Alde flue cap. We've got two new ones, but decided to leave the old, broken one on until we're out of the small locks.

We moor at the Shroppie Fly. Well, half of WRT is on a 24 hour mooring, the other half is on a not-timed mooring. We've done about ten miles and all three of us are shattered.



Shroppie Fly

## MARKET DAY – 18 APRIL 2016

After a pointless walk to the Post Office in Audlem (closed till further notice), and having Gary Spruce delivering a new CO-alarm, we set off. No sun today, and strong winds, guess who's on the tiller? And who's doing the twelve remaining locks of the Audlem Flight?

To keep up my lock skills I do Lock 13 for a single boater. When I open all the paddles I'm sure I see the grass next to the lock 'wave' and fall. No, I'm not drunk, and my glasses don't play that kind of tricks with me. I report this to the CRT crew that's gathering here at the moment. Somehow I don't think they believe me...

All locks are set for us. I.E. they are empty. Except for when we approach Lock 8. There is a CRT crew examining the lock for future maintenance work. One of them sees us coming, and decides to help us: he starts filling up the lock. He explains his mistake with the words: usually the boats come from the other direction...

While the lock gets empty again I have to deal with the weir just after Lock 7, the strong winds, and the by-wash at Lock 8. Like I have to deal with the weir after Lock n, the strong winds, and the by-wash at Lock n+1.

I manage to rip off the remains of the Alde flue cap, and some paint miraculously disappears as well.

At Lock 1 (in the middle of nowhere) a lady helps with the lock. My first thought: hookers? No, she lives at the cottage and sells cream-teas-to-go. A very welcome lunch, after all the work.



Take away Cream Tea

When we get to Adderley Locks I realise I found a way to handle the wind and the by-washes.. All these locks are set for us as well, but an oncoming CRT barge decides not to wait, and makes us get stuck between Lock 3 and Lock 4. This Lock 4 is a bit of a pain, because with all the paddles open, it fills till just under two inches, and starts unfilling again. It needs two people to force the front lock door open to fill it completely and to let us out.

We moor at Bridge 62 at Market Drayton. A few minutes later I see a boat, reversing towards us. An oldish woman, with an old boat, reverses from one 48 hour mooring to the next. She doesn't have a clue how to reverse her boat, and she runs straight into our freshly painted WRT. Both WRT and me scream, but the woman (certainly high on something) just shrugs her shoulders.

That's enough for us, after about 6 miles of cruising and 17 locks. Lawrance is knackered, I'm frozen. So we call it a day (or two).

## SPEED RESTRICTION – 21 APRIL 2016

After a few days at the nice village of Market Drayton we resume cruising. Lawrance is at the tiller (beautiful day, hardly any wind, lots of sunshine). After the five Tyrley Locks, which are heavy, and unpredictable, we have to lower our speed: road works in Woodseaves Cutting.



Market Drayton

Woodseaves Cutting reminds us of a tropical rain forest. The canal is narrow and cut through solid rock, overgrown with ferns and other greens. It must look great when there are leaves on the trees, and when some flowers break the green scenery.



Tropical Rain Forest

And as Pearson's Canal Guide says: the high bridges span the canal to the mysterious chasms of another world.



Portal to another world



Wharf Tavern



Which one is small?

It takes us three hours to get to Goldstone Wharf, where the Wharf Tavern just forces us to stop and have lunch. A Ploughman's Lunch for Lawrance and a SMALL Ploughman's Lunch for me.

Two hours later we get back to the boat, look at the time and decide: we might as well stay here for the night. We move to the front of the 48 hour mooring, top up with water, and get the seats out of the top box.

What a horrible life.

## FIRE AT THE CADBURY CHOCOLATE FACTORY? – 22 APRIL 2016

It's my day at the tiller, so it's a bit cold, a bit windy, but also a bit sunny. Today we plan to go all the way to Norbury Junction.

Just as we approach Knighton I hear a sound, coming from the front of the boat. It takes some time to realise that I hear a siren. So it's not on WRT. We think of World War Three, until we see a bridge full of people in food factory dresses, complete with hair protection. They walk slowly, so we assume it's a fire drill.

We pass a factory in the middle of nowhere. The factory was opened by Cadbury (the chocolate manufacturers) in 1911 as a centre for processing milk. It's now owned by Premier Foods. There is no commercial boat traffic to this factory anymore, but under the overhanging roof are still some old working boats moored.



Cadbury Wharf at Knighton

We go through another cutting, Grub Street Cutting. It has a remarkable bridge, with a telegraph pole inside it.



Free Wifi?

After three hours we moor up at Norbury Junction. We've done 6 miles.

This is getting out of hand!

## JUNCTION? WHAT JUNCTION? – 24 APRIL 2016

No, I didn't write the previous posts on the dates they are apparently published. There is not enough time to write posts when cruising on a canal like the Shropshire Union Canal, in the perfect spring weather. Too many locks, too many canalside pubs that needs visiting, too many people to chat with. Oh, yes, and not having a telephone signal most of the time doesn't help either: no mobile hotspot.



Early Morning at Norbury Junction

We're still at Norbury Junction. A busy boat yard (with a well stocked chandlery), hire boats, CRT maintenance yard, pub, and a very nice CRT facilities building, that puts most English truck stops to shame.



Norbury Junction Wharf

The weather is still exceptional fine. I'm up early, and decide to take some pictures. It's f\*\*g cold. There is ice on the the windmill on the gang plank, and on the entire boat. Not a surprise, under this clear blue sky...



Frost on the Windmill

We still have work to do. I manage to scrape all the varnish off the glass in the front door, and off the porthole glass. I also manage to get most of the varnish of the meters and gauges on the instrument panel. Lawrance changed the fridge door from right to left. To blend in with the rest of the (left-handed) kitchen, he says. But it's done to prevent the kitchen towels getting stuck in the door and not sealing the fridge properly.

There are still fragments of paint popping up here and there in the boat. We bang the tongue-and-groove to get most out, so hopefully that problem is solved now. After we both had a (CRT) shower we go to have our mid-afternoon (half) pint.



CRT building at Norbury Junction

Then, after some reading/catnaps it's preparing supper, doing the dishes, and before you know it it's time to do the famous 'ash trick' (empty the ash pan in the ash bucket, put the ash bucket in the well deck, open one of the sides of the cratch cover and the ash miraculously disappears...).

Another day gone. Will we ever get used to a life like this?

## ON THE (NOT SO) STRAIGHT AND (F\*\*G) NARROW – 27 APRIL 2016

It's sunny but cold when I move the boat to Turner's Garage. We fuel up with the cheapest diesel we've seen so far (thanks, Ann and Mick, for the tip).



Turner's Garage



Cheap Red Diesel

After that we move to the other side of the bridge and the canal, to Wheaton Aston Services. To top up the water, and get all the bird's shite off the boat.



Shite

While doing this I spot a heap of smoke, somewhere around the lock in the distance. I soon realise: that's not ordinary smoke, coming from someone who just topped up the fire. It's too white, and way too much.



Steam in the Distance

It's steam! To confirm this I hear the sound of a steam whistle, which always melts my heart. I know of only one surviving steam narrowboat, but what would a famous boat like President do on an average day on an average canal? But it is indeed President, with butty Kildare. I manage to take good pictures of the pair, and it makes my day. I don't care what else the day brings...



Old days

Topped up, and kind of clean we make our way through the lock, and down south.

It's still sunny, and quite warm (when one is out of the wind) but I decide to keep my jacket on, for now. Right enough, because when, at noon, I leave the tiller to Lawrance to have my lunch, the weather suddenly realizes that it is me on the tiller. It gets pitch dark, and we're in a big hail storm. I quickly finish my lunch, because Lawrance doesn't even have his jacket on.

Rain, hail and wind will be our travel companions for a while. We meander through the countryside, again through cuttings and some narrow parts of the canal. And just before Autherley Junction we come to a stop lock. Lawrance jumps off, opens the lock and I steer WRT into the lock. I always go slowly, entering locks, but when WRT is halfway into the lock I realize: I'm going awful slow. No, rephrase that, I'm not going at all. But I am on tick-over...

Long story short: WRT (always doing as she's told) must think: it's a stop lock, so I better stop. And here we are, stuck in a stop lock. After Lawrance impatiently waving and shouting, and me throwing my hands in the air, him and a bypasser find out what the problem is: the lock door doesn't open fully and WRT is stuck. It takes two men to force the door to open just a little bit more and finally I manage to squeeze WRT into the lock.

Immediately after the lock there is a T-junction, with a very sharp left turn for us. In fact, the turn is so close to the lock that the bow of WRT is almost at the other end of the canal while the stern is still in the lock. Luckily there is no other traffic, and the wind is from the right direction.

That's us on a new canal, the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal, or Staffs & Worcs for short. A nice, wide canal to start off with, but after about a mile that changes completely. It narrows for half a mile. It's like a single lane road, with (two) passing places. While Lawrance walks the towpath on the look-out for oncoming traffic, I try to steer a 6 ft 10 inch wide narrowboat through a 6 ft 12 inch crooked gap in the rocks, while trying to have some paint left when the canal widens again. Luckily there is no oncoming traffic, and we're soon back on cruising speed.

But not for long. A sign on the towpath tells us: Canalworks. Maximum delays of 30 minutes. And just as we're coming around a bend we see a dredger.



*Dredger on way home*

Luckily we don't have to wait long. He sees us, and makes room for us to pass. On tick-over I move the boat towards the dredger and the barge, and when I'm next to him WRT stops (again). Lawrance assures me that we have bags of room on portside, but whatever I do, we're not moving... We're grounded! WRT isn't going forward, nor wants to reverse. In the end the old trick works: Lawrance on the front tilts the boat just enough for the stern to get off the ground. Yes, it is certainly time to dredge this part of the canal!

After that it's a piece of cake to get to Coven for our daily break. The rain stops, out comes the sun. We decide to go to the Fox & Anchor for a (half) pint and a meal.

P.S. No, we didn't teleport ourselves from Norbury Junction to Wheaton Aston. It was just an uneventful day (Lawrance on the tiller, nice weather). So no pictures and no text. But a picture, taken the next day. No, this is not Photoshoped. It's the real stuff: SNOW.



*Snow in Wheaton Aston*

## ABANDONED – 02 MAY 2016

It is happening again. Like when Lawrance left to play golf, last year, the moment he leaves us now on Thursday it suddenly is summer. Temperatures rise immediately, just when I want to do a heap of things that involve hard work. I want to get rid of all the residue (dust) that's still all over the place. Mixed with coal dust, because we still have the fire going. Well, not for long, because even with the fire on tick-over it is 32°C inside.

I'm at Stafford Boat Club, a very nice place to be. Nice people, a bar. All the amenities, except for a tumble dryer, and wifi doesn't reach WRT. But, to balance that, they have their own lock.



Stafford Boat Club Lock

On the other side of the bridge over the entrance is a familiar boat. It's just visible in the early morning mist. They will be back on Monday.



A Familiar Boat

Because of the temperature I decide to do one part of the boat per day. Walls, furniture and floor. The utility room first, because I also have to do the laundry. Luckily I can use the whirly here, but the more south we get, the harder the water. So when the laundry is dry, everything can stand upright against the wall.



Doing the Laundry

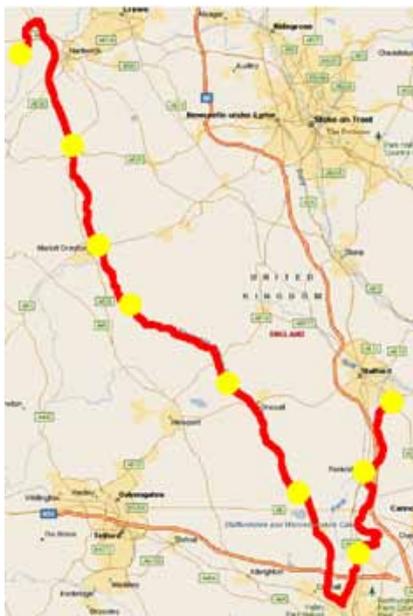
While doing the bedroom I find out that our bedroom radiator is leaking. I already know that the oil cooler front end cap is leaking. I decide to ignore both problems.

I manage to find a (good) hairdresser, and beautician within 10 minutes walking.



## SWANLEY BRIDGE MARINA TO STAFFORD BOAT CLUB – 03 MAY 2016

Time for a bit of data.



Swanley to Stafford

From **Swanley Bridge Marina** to **Stafford Boat Club** is 58 miles. With 41 locks. We managed to do all this in 19 days, of which 8 days of cruising.

### Statistics

average cruising per cruising day: 7.25 miles

average cruising per calendar day: 3.05 miles

locks per cruising day: 5.125

cruising every 2.375 day

total engine hours: 41.3

## CRUISING AND PLAYING – 13 MAY 2016

We're back in Coven (see *On the (not so) Straight and (f\*\*g) Narrow*). Not because we like it that much, but because it has a golf course.

On the Wednesday the four of us started heading south. First back to Penkridge. It's my day at the tiller, so it is raining. Not a lot, but still.

Needless to say that once we're moored up, the rain stops...



*Two years ago today*

Exactly two years ago today we spent our first night on WRT. To celebrate this we leave her on her own and have a meal at the Spanish restaurant Rorah. After that we play Triominoes. It's so late when we get back to WRT that she is fast asleep.

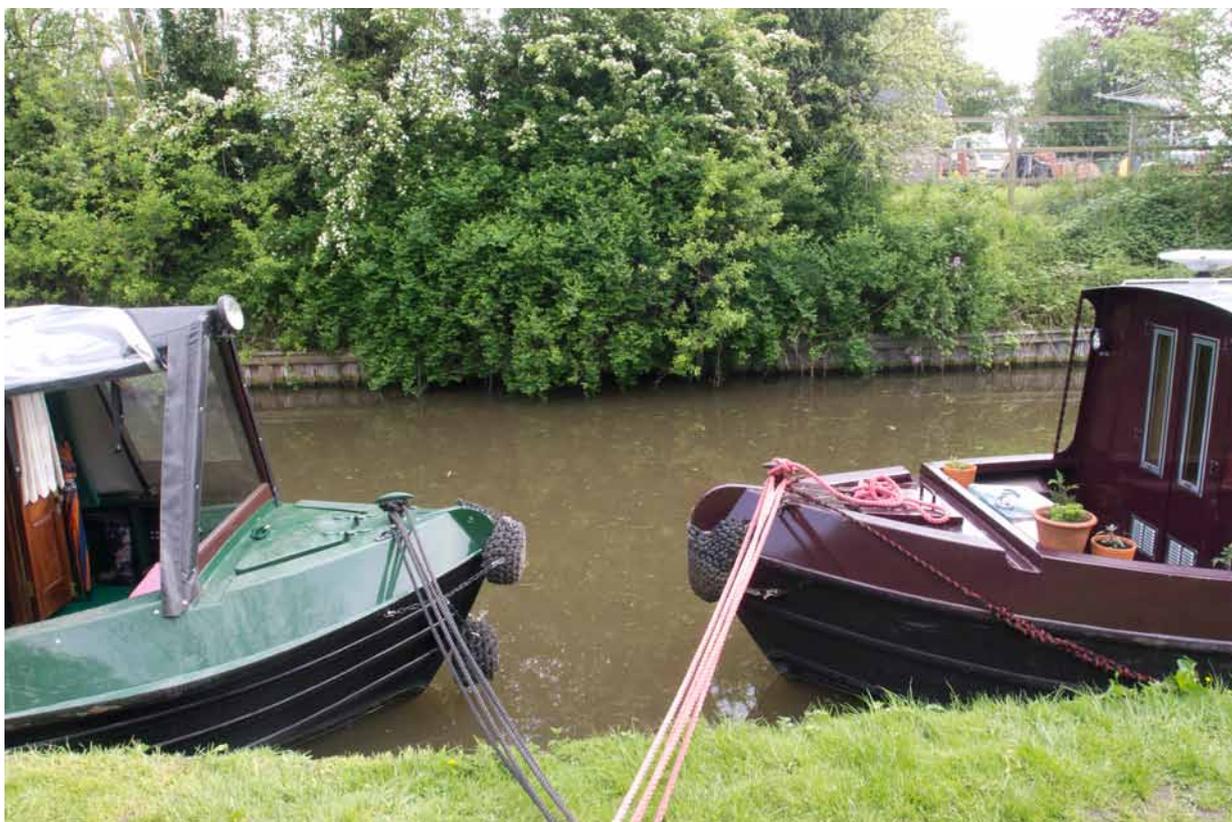
The next day it's Lawrance's turn on the tiller. It's a brilliant day for cruising: sunny and warm. After mooring up we get our golf stuff from underneath the bed. Golf clubs, and... trolley???

No, we find the battery for the trolley, but we must have left the trolley in the storage box at Scarisbrick Marina. Since the golf course doesn't have trolleys we have to carry the clubs. But it's only a par-3 course, so I decide to take only half of my clubs.



Playing Golf

Three of us play golf, and all four of us have an afternoon drink on the terrace at the Fox & Anchor. This is followed by a meal at the same place, but inside; evenings are still a bit chilly.



Going Separate Ways

Tomorrow we're go separate ways: Ann and Mick go up north, we go further south.

## SCHWARZWÄLDER KIRSCHTORTE\* – 17 MAY 2016

That's what they should sell here.

We're at Kinver, on the south Staffordshire & Worcestershire canal. And it feels like being in the Black Forest. Green hills, small valleys with one or two houses.

But let's start with what happened before we came here.



Time to say Goodbye

On Saturday we said goodbye to Ann and Mick. Although it's my day on the tiller, it is sunny. But with a cold wind. I'm the lucky one to deal with the narrows again (see *On the (not so) Straight and (f\*\*g) Narrow*). This time Lawrance has the two-way radio with him. Probably the reason why there is no oncoming traffic. And there are no dredgers.

After Autherley Junction we're on new territory. The Staffs & Worcs Canal is still beautiful. Tree-lined (therefore a bit cold), but clean, charming and very quiet.

We spend two days at Compton, for shopping and laundrette.

The next day it's Lawrance's turn on the tiller. I have to do the locks.

We have 14 locks to deal with, two of them being our first staircase lock. Most of them are in walking distance from each other, so in the end I walk about 3 miles. Not a problem in this nice weather.



Hard Work

But it is a lock too far for my safety boots. After 13 years they are gone...



These boots are no longer made for walking

At Bratch Locks there are lock keepers. Which is good, because these locks are a bit awkward. They are three separate locks, but there is only about a metre between the locks. No space to pass oncoming traffic, and no space to stop to do the next lock.



Bratch Top Lock



What to do

We stop at Greensforge Services for water/garbage/cassette, and drinks and a meal at the (very good) Navigator.

The next day we head for Kinver. I'm on the tiller, Lawrance only has to do 6 locks. Some off them are really narrow, but they all behave very well. After we moor up clouds are gathering. Will we have rain tomorrow?



Toll Booth at Stewponey Lock



Kinver in the Black Forest

\***Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte**: Black Forest gâteau

## A MAGICAL EXPERIENCE – 21 MAY 2016

On the Wednesday we exchange the charming Black Forest for the depressing surroundings of Weavers Wharf at Kidderminster. We moor next to Tesco, but I don't like the place. I'm afraid I will wake up in the morning and find WRT covered in graffiti.

That's not the case, but later I'm told that hire boats are advised NOT to stop at Kidderminster...



Kidderminster

But it is perfect to do shopping at Tesco: we can take the trolley all the way to the boat. And no, WE DON'T DUMP THE TROLLEY IN THE CANAL AFTERWARDS...!

So after one night we start heading for Stourport-on-Severn. The weather is overcast/sunny to start off; I'm on the tiller. Once we're past the first two locks Lawrance gets inside to have his lunch.

I hear a strange sound. It sounds like something metal vibrating against metal, because of the vibration of the engine. When I go into neutral the sounds disappears. But is back as soon as I speed up again. And not much later I hear something metal falling onto something metal. I can hear it even with the noise of the engine. And it comes from the engine compartment. Immediately I steer for the towpath, and see in the corner of my eye that the alternator light comes on. I press the horn to get Lawrance's attention (we still have to get a new telephone between tiller and galley) and I moor up.

Lifting the engine cover reveals the problem straight away: the pulley on the water pump has sheered off. This means no water pump (so no cooling) and no alternator (because the alternator belt runs on the same pulley). Time to phone River Canal Rescue.



Water Pump Pulley and Spacer

I remember bridge 10 but not bridge 9, so I guess we're in the middle between these bridges. RCR tells us that they will send an engineer. When he will be here is not clear. They will also try to find someone to tow us into Stourport, but this might take at least 48 hours.

So we start towing WRT towards Stourport ourselves. Of course it starts raining now.

The first bend and bridge we pass without problems. But at the next bridge there is a boat moored on the towpath side, and it has an enormous tall TV-aerial. Lawrance gives WRT a final good pull, I jump on, and we hope she will miss that boat (which she does), and stay on course (which she doesn't). So I end up using the barge pole. Which is not of any use; I hit only mud, never reach the bottom of the canal, and have extreme difficulties to get the barge pole out of the water again. And of course, at that very moment there is a boat coming...!



Phone call from RCR

After 0.8 miles we reach a pub, The Bird in Hand at Upper Mitton. Just before that RCR phones again: The water pump/alternator pulley is NOT part of the engine. So the problem has nothing to do with the engine and they are not covering the costs. Lawrance tells them that he thinks the entire water pump is gone. They tell us to go to Stourport boat yard and get a new one. How, we ask ourselves? Yes, we can start the engine, but we won't get very far, with a water cooled engine and no water pump. After a long (and loud) phone call they tell us that an engineer will see us tomorrow morning at ten o'clock. So we lock the boat, and go for a beer and a very good meal in the pub.

It's well after ten at night when we get back on the boat. Lawrance gets involved with the locals and plays darts.



The next morning (Lawrance is still asleep) the engineers turn up. At 9 o'clock, not at 10 o'clock, as they told us. One of the guys stays, and him and Lawrance tow WRT all the way down to Stourport, with me on the tiller. Again a distance of 0.8 miles.



A two-person powered narrowboat

We temporary moor at the CRT Services, waiting till the work boat from the boat yard gets in to tow us to a jetty in the marina.



Stourport Services



*With a little help from a friend*

And here we are. On a floating jetty in Stourport Upper Basin. With electricity, so we have hot water. The engineer, called out by RCR manages to convince RCR that we need a complete new water pump. It's ordered, and the engineer will get it on Monday or Tuesday. It seems that we might get some of the costs back...

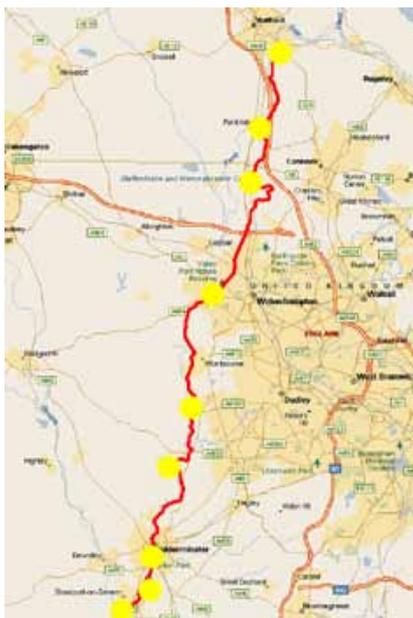


*A Magical Experience*

In the mean time we have to enjoy this. Pearson's Canal Companion says:  
To moor in the Upper Basin, listening to time being measured by the quarter beats of the clock tower's sonorous bell, is one of the inland waterways' most magical experiences.

## STAFFORD BOAT CLUB TO STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN – 21 MAY 2016

Time again for a bit of data.



Stafford to Stourport

From Stafford Boat Club to **Stourport-on-Severn** is 41 miles. With 40 locks. We managed to do all this in 10 days, of which 8 days of cruising.

### Statistics

average cruising per cruising day: 5.125 miles

average cruising per calendar day: 4.1 miles

locks per cruising day: 5

cruising every 1.25 day

total engine hours: 25.5





Venice?

And because I'm reading Donna Leon's books about Commissario Brunetti, it's hard to believe I'm in Stourport-on-Severn, and not in Venice. I even found local mosaics.



Mosaic

Although I don't think Venice has locks the way Stourport has.



Towards the river Severn

But, if you were in Venice, you would not understand the people, you probably say to yourself now. Correct, but I can hardly understand the natives in Stourport either. I can hear them better though, after I went to the nearest medical practice, registered myself as a temporary patient, and had my ears syringed...



Hard to understand locals

That's another thing I found out: the more south of the (Scottish) border I get, the least I can understand the locals. I wonder how far south I need to go before I'm totally lost...

## NEEDED A SEAT – 06 JUNE 2016

You think we are in the UK?

Well, over the last days I've seen rocks as in the Dordogne (complete with caves), hills and valleys as in the Black Forest and Danish seats. OK, a short summary.

Reluctantly we left Stourport Basin and the extremely nice boaters and locals there. They actually were so nice, I even made a cup of tea for them.



A nice cup of tea

We got as far as The Bird in Hand, just around the corner. After all these lazy days one cannot suddenly do a 20-hour day. So this must be our shortest crusing day up till now: 45 minutes.

The next day we did stop at Kidderminster, but only for getting our shoppings. Then we went on to Wolverley Lock. Followed by the trip from the Dordogne to the Black Forest. And then we needed a seat.

No, not what you think. We needed new seats. Ours we're still kind of OK, but one was mechanical not in a very good state. And who is at Kinver? Wilson, the company that sells the type of seats we want, And (even more important): IN GREEN. They are Danish, cost an arm and a leg, and were delivered by wheel barrow.



Delivered by wheel barrow

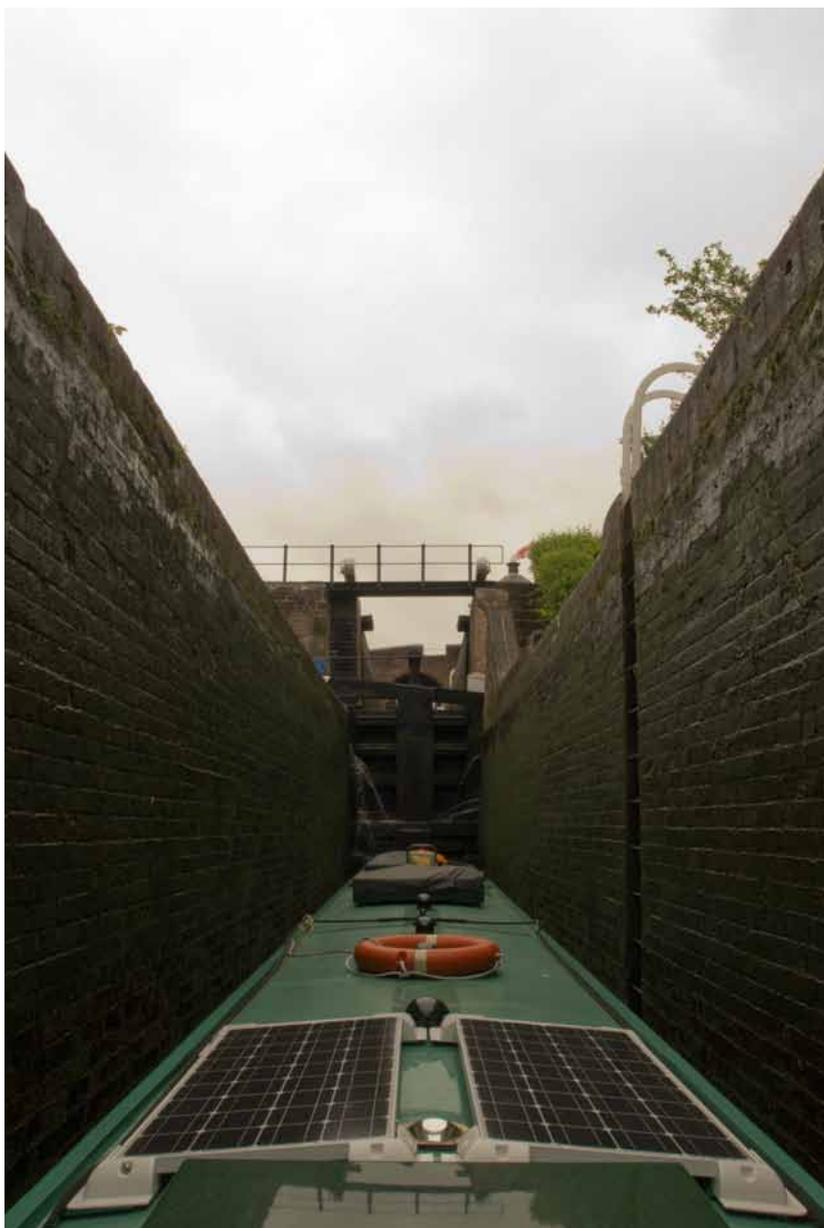
And by cheap labour...



Cheap labour

But they are very comfortable, and look very nice.

Of course we did our staircase lock again (scary, to face that very high door in front of you) and Bratch Locks.



Bratch Locks going up

After a night at Greensforge Locks Services we ended up in Compton for the weekend. Did the laundry (and had a beer in The Swan, while the laundry was in the tumble dryer), got a lot of food, did some engine maintenance, and sat outside, reading. Preparing ourselves for the task we would face on Monday.

Which was the Wolverhampton Flight of 21 locks (plus Compton Lock, of course), on our way to the Black Country Living Museum. In tropical heat, and me doing the locks. But I managed.



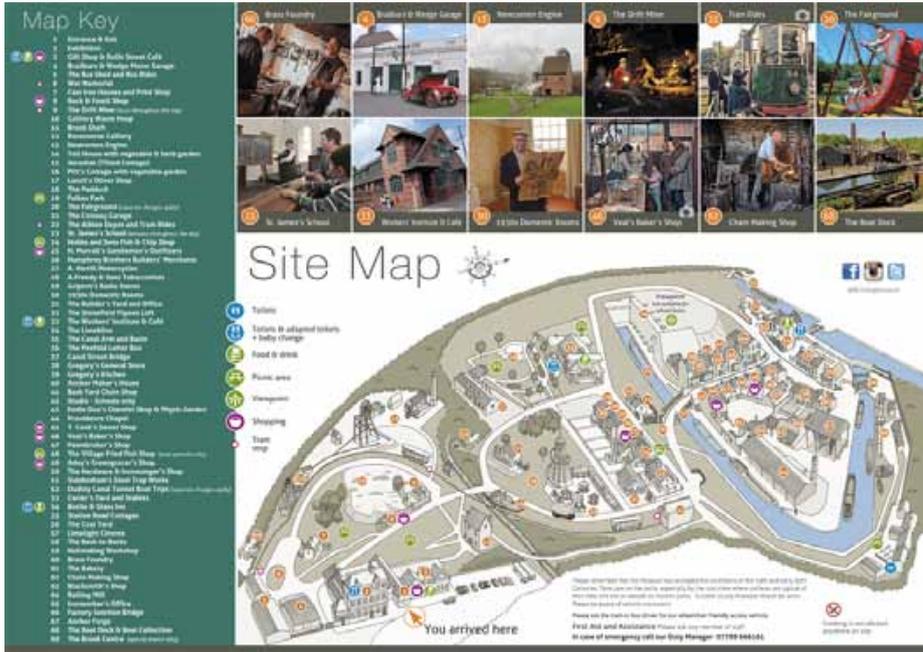
*Did it!*

Didn't see tree trunks in the locks (like on the way up to Compton); this time it was a penis. It certainly made me smile...!

After eight hours of hard work (me)/doing nothing (L) and our first 'normal' tunnel (straight – wide) we moored just next to the (back) entrance of the Black Country Living Museum. Another mile stone on our epic journey.

# LEGGING – 08 JUNE 2016

I should write about the Black Country Living Museum. But either I write a book about it, or tell you to go on their website and have a look yourself.



BCLM Map

This is the map of the museum, and I visited everything. Went into the mine, did rope skipping, took the trolley bus (not exiting when you used to live near Arnhem...), drove the tram.



Driving the tram

Absolutely brilliant. Interesting, fun, learned a lot. I only found one dissonant: a note on a piece of paper on a hot stove? I don't think so!



Dissonant

Two days I spent at the museum, with the exception of an hour or two, when we did a boat trip into the Dudley Tunnels.

I always wonder why people want to do multimedia shows in caverns and mines.

This one was even worse than the one I saw in Yaoling Cave, near Hangzhou, in China. Probably because this time I was able to understand the language.

But the boat trip was remarkable for the legging. No, not a piece of clothing, a means of propulsion. Used to 'power' a boat in a tunnel. I had a chance to leg the trip boat.



Proof

I even got a certificate.



Legging Certificate

And when you take out the text of the certificate, it becomes clear what it is all about.



Legging

You see, I've been pretty busy, lately. And, with a lack of proper internet access, it's very difficult to write a blog. I absolutely don't understand how people, cruising on a narrowboat, can write a post every day.

I certainly can't...

## BIRMINGHAM AND BEYOND – 14 JUNE 2016

There is about a week between the Black Country Museum, and Stampot Andijvie. With (once again) no time to write.

Leaving the basin at the Black Country Living Museum it's my day at the tiller. We take the motorway (i.e. Birmingham Canal Navigations Old Main Line) to the centre of Birmingham: Gas Street Basin.



The motorway

Although the weather is fine, underneath the motorway it's bloody cold.



Where old meets new

But it's a lot easier to get to the middle of Birmingham by boat than it is by car.



Going down town

And it's a lot easier to find a parking space.



48 hrs parking without paying

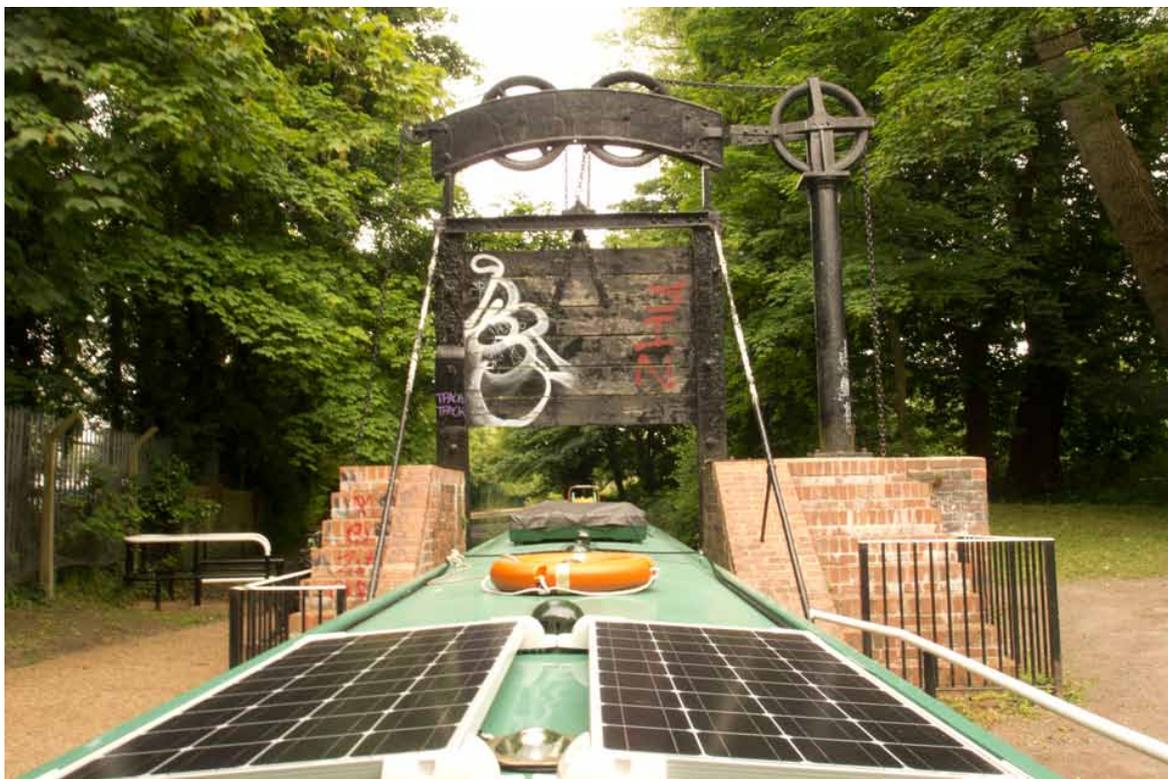
But is it The Place To Be? No, not really. There are only posh shops, and restaurants. All the students are in Prom dress (so we look definitely old and shabby). We're moored right next to the entrance of a night club (that will be open tomorrow night). We have a drink at an old canal side pub, and have a delicious meal at Strada.



On the border

Then it is bed time. I hear nothing, but at around eleven someone bangs against the boat. Lawrance gets out, but there seems to be no damage. When I wake up at half past midnight everything is quiet.

The next day we take the opportunity to try to get yarn (no chance), books to read and sudoku books. Then we head south.



Guillotine-gated stop-lock

We enter the Stratford Canal via the only guillotine-gated stop-lock on a canal, and stop at Lyon's Boatyard for fuel, gas, engine oil and Elsan Blue. The owners of the boatyard? The owners of Stealth, the boat that is moored next to us in Scarisbrick Marina!

We spend the night opposite the boatyard.

Our next stop is Hockley Heath. We have a look at a possible new car (there is a McLaren dealer in Hockley Heath), Lawrance checks the weed hatch (a very long piece of wire and a piece of lace), have a drink at the Wharf Tavern, and, after two nights, move to Lawsonford.

Lawsonford is only two lift bridges and 28 locks away. We start early. Lawrance is on the tiller, I'll do the locks and the bridges.



Lift bridge no 2

I manage to do these bridges (just) and four of the locks (just); then I have to go on the tiller. The locks are much too heavy for me. As fellow boater/blogger and friend Ian words it: “I’m always amazed to see little bird-like women heaving away at lock beams, while some hefty geezer leans on nothing more substantial than the tiller.” Oh, if need be I would manage, but it will take weeks: I have to take the windlass off, after every quarter turn, reposition it and do another quarter turn.



Old times (truck) meet new times (boat)

After just over 5 hours we moor at Lawsonford, have a delicious meal at the Fleur de Lys and leave for Wilmcote the next day.

Now we're getting closer to the Tudors.

I do my first aqueduct, which (although very short) is very scary. Because once you're on the aqueduct you can't see the canal anymore. There are no walls on both sides, one just floats in the air...



Wootton Waven Aqueduct

I get stuck in the odd lock.

No, don't worry, I get stuck in one lock, called Bearley Lock or Odd Lock. The door doesn't open properly and, like the stop lock at the end of the Shroppie WRT suddenly stops. And is truly stuck. She's going nowhere, not forward, not reverse.



Stuck between door and lock

It takes another boat to push WRT back into the lock, so the lock door can be closed again. Then out comes barge poles and hooks to find the culprit. The two men never find all the stuff, but remove enough for WRT to get out. The whole manoeuvre (cruising out of the lock) takes us 25 minutes, and it is needless to mention that just (and only) during these 25 minutes it rains heavily...



Find the blockage

I do my second aqueduct, Edstone Aqueduct, which is a lot longer, and also very scary. Especially when it is absolutely windy, and the wind blows you to the side without any fence...



Edstone Aqueduct

We stop at Wilmcote, have a drink in Mary Ardens Inn and do some shopping in the local village shop. Tomorrow we will visit Mary Arden's House.

## HOW THE TUDORS EAT STAMPPOT ANDIJVIE – 15 JUNE 2016

Because it is called Mary Arden's House in some of the guides, I assume we will visit just a house; the house Shakespeare's mother used to live in. But we're in for a nice surprise: it's a Living Tudor Farm Museum. We arrive just before one o'clock, and the first scheduled event is a Tudor Dinner.



Tudor dish

In the kitchen of the farm a Tudor dinner is prepared, and we can watch the owner of the farm, and his servants, eating it.



Tudor meal

While eating they explain all about their lives on the farm, in Tudor days. Very interesting!

Then we explore the rest of the farm. There are the usual farm animals, there is a falconer, a black smith, a wood worker, and of course Mary Arden's house.

I especially like the kitchen of the farm. And they actually prepared the whole dinner in this kitchen. Made the bread in the oven outside. Brilliant.



Falconer

All the vegetables are from the gardens around the farm. The gardens are great. Flower gardens, herb gardens, and a vegetable garden. I love all of them. Especially when I discover this:



Endive

I can but stand in front of it and think of Stamppot Andijvie.

When I see Alan, the gardener, I ask him:

“You don’t, by any chance, sell produce out of your gardens?”

“No, it’s all for here, and the restaurants in the other Shakespeare museums. Why?”

So I explain about our national dish, and me not being able to buy endive in the UK.

To my surprise he says:

“I have to take something out of the endive anyway. There is too much of them. You can have a head, if you like...”



*Looking forward to it!*

If I like? I’m over the moon!

OK, it looks a bit silly, Lawrance walking through the museum with a head of endive. And it is the curly type, so not as bitter as the normal type. But I can but smile, thinking of a nice stampot andijvie!

At around three o’clock Lawrance is ready for his afternoon siesta, so we go back to the boat.

But I return to the museum at half past four, to do some Tudor dances. And revisit the parts of the museum I really like.



Tudor farm

Tomorrow we have to buy potatoes and lardons, and we'll have a delicious Tudor Stampot Andijvie.

## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM – 17 JUNE 2016

It should have been *The Merchant of Venice* (because that's what I read for English Literature in Grammar School), but you can't win them all. So *A Midsummer Night's Dream* it is. An expensive dream (£65 per person), set unfortunately not in Tudor time but in the thirties. Performed at the famous Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon.



*Before it all happens*

Viewed by us on the 16th of June 2016.



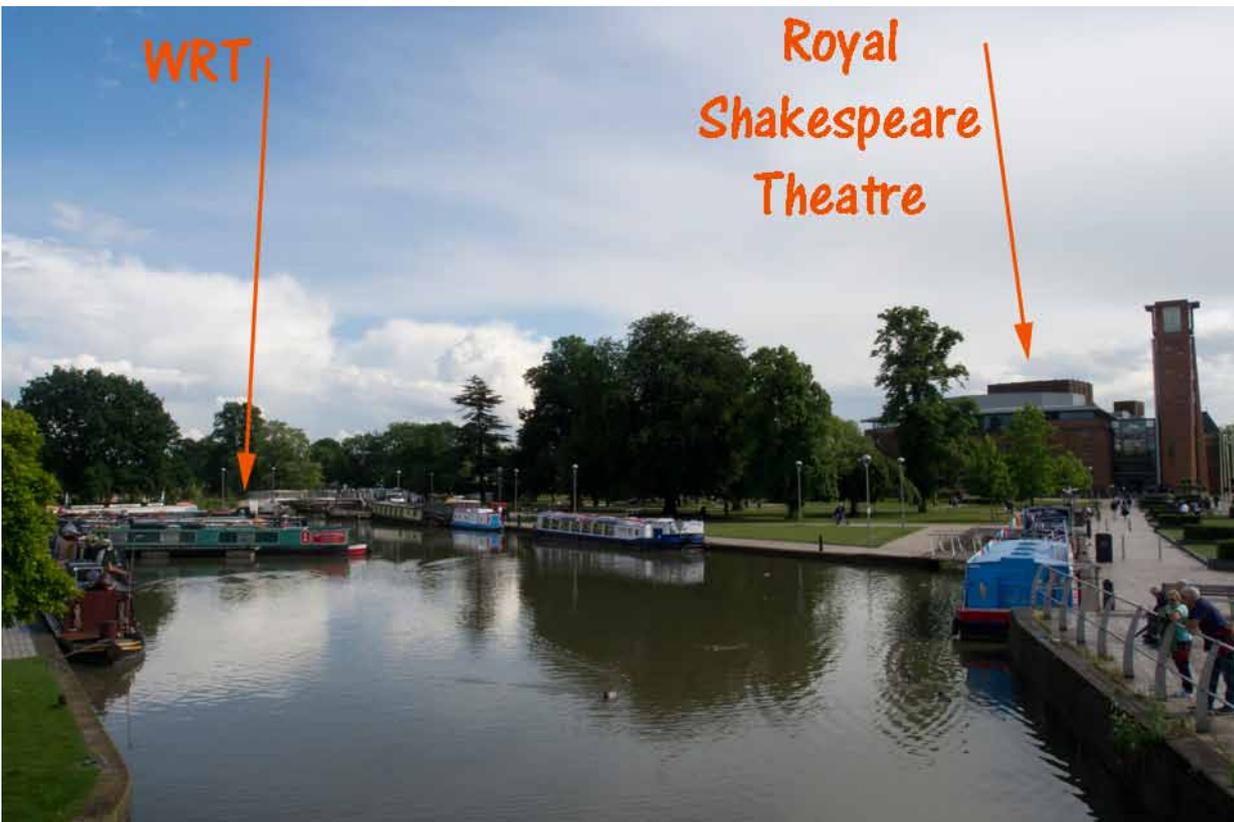
*Dressed to the T(heatre)*

We're moored right in the middle of everything: Bancroft Basin. The Bard is sitting in front of us. Stage two of Aviva's Women's Tour 2016 passes, just after we moored up, at the other side of the park.



Aviva's Women's Tour 2016, watched by the Bard

And the Royal Shakespeare Theatre is on the other side of the basin.



The centre of everything

We must be in about 20,000 pictures, taken by as many Japanese tourists. Other than that, Stratford is uneventful. It doesn't have a yarn shop. But it does have a laundrette.



Doing the laundry

We realize that we're not used to cities anymore, and decide not to overstay in Stratford-upon-Avon.

## BLACK AND BLUE – 18 JUNE 2016 – by WRT

You think I'm green?

No, not that green, you idiot! I'm a grown up girl, thank you.

I mean green as in appearance. Like coming from Mars (would I be pink, if I came from Venus?).

OK, I'm green with a bit of black, to be precise.

Today she offers to do the locks, coming up from Stratford-on-Avon.

What, you didn't know we were at Stratford-upon-Avon? Did she not mentioned that in the blog? Oh, I have to have words with her!



Mars, Venus or Scotland?

Anyway, I am wearing the Scottish flag, the Scottish tiller tassle, finished off with the Scottish tiller pin. Happy whistling, me and Lawrance leave Bancroft Basin, heading for the first lock. A lock that, by now, should be ready to enter. To set the lock she left the Basin ages ago. But no. We see someone who makes a big show about opening it. Struggling with the paddles, windlass flying off and hitting her knee. Limping to the other side of the lock where, except for the flying windlass, the show is repeated. By the time the lock is open I'm ready for my lunch...

Of course, the whole scene completely melts Lawrance's heart.

"You go on the tiller", he says. "I will do the locks."

Was that not the entire purpose of all this, I ask myself?

OK, I must admit, she's usually very good at locks. Most times I'm in the locks before I realize it.  
BUT NOT TODAY!

She keeps the right course, going towards the lock, but just as I'm close to the lock wall I'm suddenly forced aside. And although I'm going slow, of course I bump into the lock wall! And into the lock wall on the other side. And into the first one again...

By the time we've done all the locks of the Wilmcote Flight I'm so battered, you could fry me and call me Boat Fingers.

At Wilmcote I just refuse to go any further. I make sure there is a space, just big enough for me to moor. And, although Lawrance left another arnco barrier pin when they moored to go to Tesco, I wiggle myself onto the bank and call it a day.

Time to attend to all my bruises...

Oh, and you know what her excuse is? The by-washes. The by-washes? My \*\*\*\*!

## CRÈME BRÛLÉE AU FLEUR DE LYS – 26 JUNE 2016

### Audlem, 16-04-2016

“A boat just moored behind us”, he says.

“Did you see them?”, she asks.

“Yes.”

“Did you speak to them?”

“No, I think they’re crème brûlée\*.”

### Market Drayton, 18-04-2016

“Shall we moor just in front of that green boat?”, he asks.

“Oh”, she says, “That’s them crème brûlée from Audlem.”

He says: “But they gave us a wave, when they left Audlem. They could be nice crème brûlée.”

### Lowsonford, 22-06-2016

After a long day of cruising (three hours!) and a lot of practising mooring up in awkward situations (because we are cruising behind two hotel boats) I moor WRT at Lowsonford. While doing that, a couple walks past us. We reckonize them. It’s the couple we were moored close to at Audlem and Market Drayton.

The next day at half past eight (Lawrance is still asleep) I move WRT to a sunnier spot: nose to nose with the ‘Audlem couple’, Pat and Stephen.



Alternative cratch cover

Probably the wrong thing to do. Me and Pat will sit outside on the towpath, and talk from 3 o’clock in the afternoon till eleven o’clock at night. OK, with a break of an hour for supper. She is in her purple period, and I give her a purple African Violet, *Saintpaulia* var. *Cremus Bruleus*.

So what is all that about crème brûlée? Well, it’s the name Pat and Stephen have for those boaters with shiny, immaculate boats (that only cruise a week every year), who don’t socialize with other, mortal boaters. The crème brûlée in the first part of the story, that’s us.

WRT is absolute shiny, and we probably didn’t say a lot, after all the hassle of getting out of Swanley Bridge

Marina and through the first three locks of the Audlem Flight. But we gave them a wave when we left, and we spoke to them (albeit short) in Market Drayton, before going to the market.

It's only now, here in Lowsonford, that Pat and Stephen find out that the shiny boat is caused by a very recent paint job...!

And yes, we talk to other, mortal boaters. Because that's what we are.

So talk we do. One day Lawrance even finds himself upside down in their engine compartment, while I do another crochet course for Pat and Lisa (who is moored behind us). Later that night Fred (Lisa's husband) explains to me how to make a Turks Head, which I manage to make early the next morning.

Brilliant days. This is what it's all about (although the weather is changing).

Unfortunately, after four days we have to go. Not that we are in a hurry. No, it's just that we have a completely empty fresh vegetables cupboard, and two completely full cassettes! We have no choice but to move on.

The night before we move though, the four of us have a meal in The Fleur de Lys\*. No need to ask what we have for dessert...



Crème Brûlée

\***Crème Brûlée** – very posh dessert

\***Fleur de Lys** – very good pub at Lowsonford

## ON THE MOTORWAY – 29 JUNE 2016

After a quiet night (with rain) at Kingswood Junction we turn onto Grand Union Canal, which must be the motorway of the canals.



Kingswood Junction

Bloody hell it's wide!

It's amazing. What a difference compared to, for example, the Trent & Mersey around Acton Bridge. And no traffic...



~The motorway of the canals

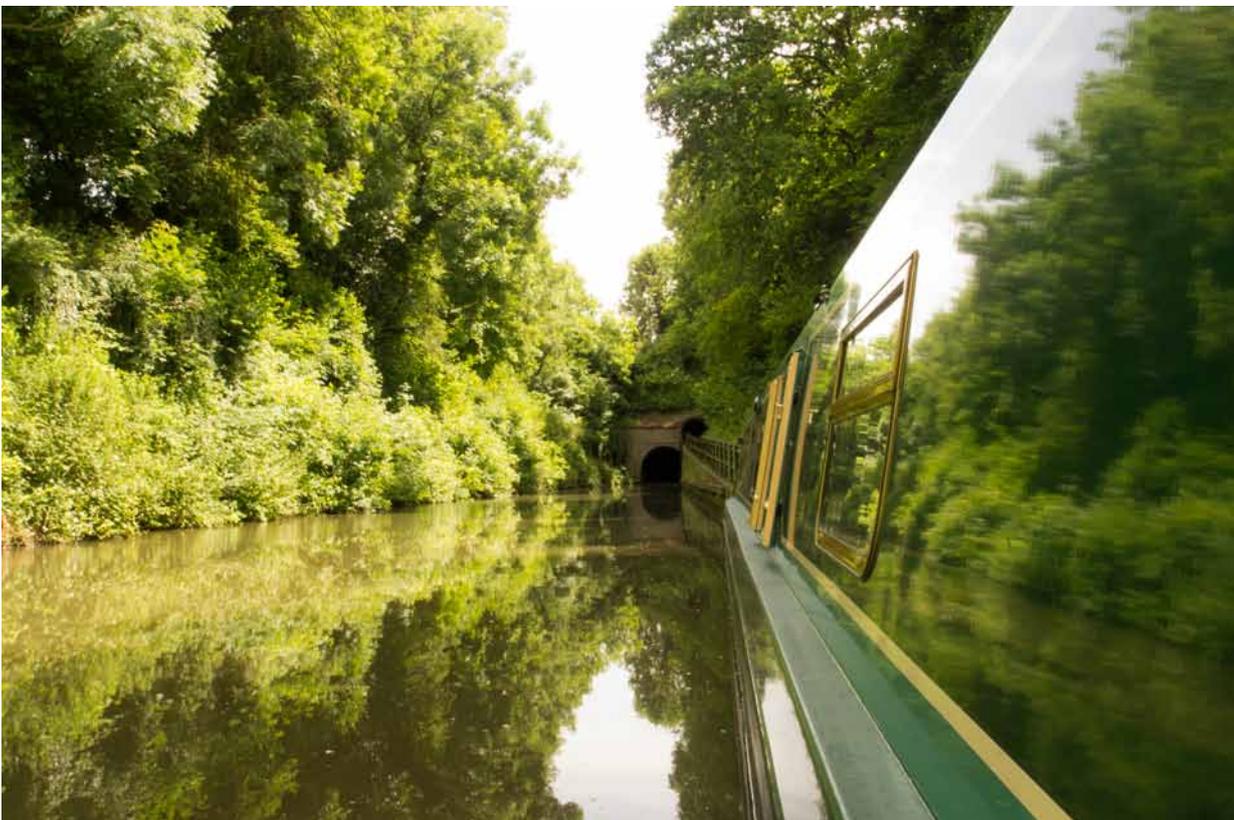
It's too much for us. After two-and-a-half hours we moor up, just before the Shrewley Tunnel.



Shrewley Tunnel

A gorgeous place, in fact the cutting is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, for it's flora and fauna. It's just not a good place for solar panels...

But it enables me to take a picture to prove how glossy our boat is.



Glossy boat

We go to the village shop for some items, and then to The Durham Ox, the local pub, for a drink. When we decide to have a meal there, we're in for a surprise. Two absolute delicious meals (Goat's cheese and mushroom risotto (L) and a quinoa burger (me)), very fresh, with fresh herbs, and very tasty.



The next day is another 'very long' day: we cruise for 45 minutes. While doing that we have a free shower. No, not the rain, it's the inside of Shrewley Tunnel. Luckily we did have our water proofs on.



Hatton Top Lock

We moor up, more or less at the top of the Hatton Flight. It's better for the solar panels, and we can have a look at the (completely different) lock system.



Hatton Lock 43:Wide enough for two

We have lunch at the cafe (Ploughman's), speak to the CRT volunteer, try out the locks paddles, take pictures.



View towards Warwick

Tomorrow we will do all the 21 locks in one day.



The next day we start with Lawrance on the tiller. We pair up with another boat. She's on the tiller, he's doing the locks. At the first lock she runs into WRT on full speed.

Not a promising start.

From then on everything goes downhill. Literally (146 6 or 44.7 metres), and figuratively. The locks are too heavy for me, so I end up at the tiller. And this other lady can't steer straight, or grasp the concept of slowing down. We cannot stay together and go into the locks together; she pushes me (us) off the straight line, and just before the lock she uses her bow thruster to get straight in. No, WRT doesn't have bow thrusters. So for the next locks I decide to go in first. Unfortunately she doesn't give me any time to slow down in the lock, jump off the boat and pull WRT right to the side of the lock. More and more paint taken off...

And to make matters worse: it's the worst weather of all our cruising days. All the four hours of going through the flight it is pouring down with rain. Even with water proofs on we still get soaked.

We make it into Saltisford Canal Centre. But don't ask...

## WHAT I DON'T HAVE ANYMORE – 05 JULY 2016

*And don't miss.*

Lawrance, maybe? Him being in Scotland at the moment, playing golf?

Well, it certainly enables me to spend a day exploring Warwick.

I find a yarn shop, and manage to get half the yarn I need.

I also manage to get a hair cut, and once again I look totally different.

And I manage to get a ticket for the castle as a senior. So it's £15 instead of something like £22.50. I still think it's expensive, for the short time I might be in.

But to my surprise I will spend 3.5 hours in the castle.



*My home is my castle*

It's huge, and when one blocks out the horrible music (George Friedrich Händel?), all the people, and all the shops selling wooden swords, foam maces and princess gowns, there is still a lot to see and read. The water powered electric system, the real old dungeon (not the expensive one with the 50 minute show), lots of paintings, armour, weapons, and some pretty interiors.

So what is it I don't have anymore? A free standing dinner table?



Free standing dinner table

Well, I never had one like this.  
Afternoons full of gossip with pals in my boudoir?



Girly conversations

Mmm, never had a room like this either. Or the dress. Or the hair style.

A house with a view over the water?



The river Avon

Wrong. I do have a house with a view over the water. The house is a bit smaller than Warwick Castle, and is called a boat.

So it is indeed Lawrance?

No, it isn't. The right answer is: STEPS.

I decide to climb the curtain wall of the castle. They warn you that the corridors are small, and dark, and that you have to climb 530 steps. It's a one-way system, so once you're in, you have to proceed.

After the first 40 odd steps on the dark spiral staircase I realize: this will be very hard.

I hardly ever walk steps, nowadays. And I've already walked to the castle (one mile from the boat), had numerous steps climbing the Mound, went through basically all the rooms in the castle. I still have to visit St Mary's church, and walk back to the boat (another mile).

In the end I just make it back to the boat. My thighs are aching, my feet want freedom.

But I should have know. I even predicted it, when I still was living in Holland...

PS. I must have something with signs. Was it a warning, printed on paper, on top of a (probably) blazing stove in the Black Country Living Museum, today it is a sign on a bed.

The ones with a dirty mind like me will know why...



Have mercy with the elderly

## DUTCH – 14 JULY 2016

Just before we leave Saltisford we find out that the couple on the Black Prince hire boat that is moored behind us... are Dutch. Elly and Ronald, on holiday on a Black Prince boat for the eight time. They're heading in the same direction so we decide to cruise together for a while. After I manage to buy some rope at Get Knotted we start doing the locks.



Dutch in the Locks

It doesn't take long before it starts raining. And while Lawrance is having his lunch, Ronald and Elly decide to moor up, and wait for better weather. I decide to do the same. And after tea/coffee on WRT it's dry again. Until just before the last two locks and the staircase.

We have an in-house meal, followed by 'a glass' of wine on Beau, the Black Prince boat. That brings back good memories of our first holiday on a narrowboat.

Needless to say that it was a bit late before we went to bed.



Good Memories

The next day starts with a question: long jeans or half jeans? It gets warm, so me and Ronald (both on the tiller) take off our fleece.

**Wrong!**

it starts raining immediately. That will happen a few times, today.



Double Dutch (picture: Elly Wouda)

We do Stockton Locks in two hours, and decide to stop for lunch. Just as I point the nose towards the bank, and reverse to slow WRT down, we hear an awful sound. When I try to reverse again, the engine almost stalls. So that's steering and breaking gone. Luckily I'm really heading for the bank, and not for nb Sundowner, behind which I want to moor. Of course I bang the bank...!

We check the weed hatch: a thick rope is wrapped, very tight, around the propeller; even the shaft doesn't move anymore. A sharp knife doesn't help. I mentioned the word 'saw', as in sawing it off. That triggers the word 'saw', as in saw.

In the end Ronald manages to get the rope off. Well, rope and pantyhose.



The Rope

After that it's easy cruising. With the occasional heavy rain, of course. At Napton Junction we say our goodbyes (in heavy rain). Elly and Ronald turn left, we turn right. Needless to say that from that moment on the weather turns absolutely beautiful...!

We stop at bridge 113, at The Folly. We have a drink (or 2, 3, 4), and a good meal. We both are shattered. Lawrance is in bed (snoring like hell) at around 20:30 hrs, me (not snoring of course) not long after that.

## AS FAR SOUTH AS WE'LL GO, THIS YEAR – 20 JULY 2016

Six cruising days, 37 locks, 19 bridges (of which nine were open) and 32 miles later we arrive at our first mooring in Oxford.

I could stop writing now; this kind of sums it up. But of course there is more to tell.

We have our first traffic jam for a lock. Not because it is busy, but because there is a piece of oak stuck between the doors. We are number eight in the queue; the first ones spend 2.5 hours before the problem is fixed. We are on our way after only one hour and forty-five minutes.

It's hard to moor on the Oxford Canal. The weeds are very high, so we need our gangplank to get off and on the boat.



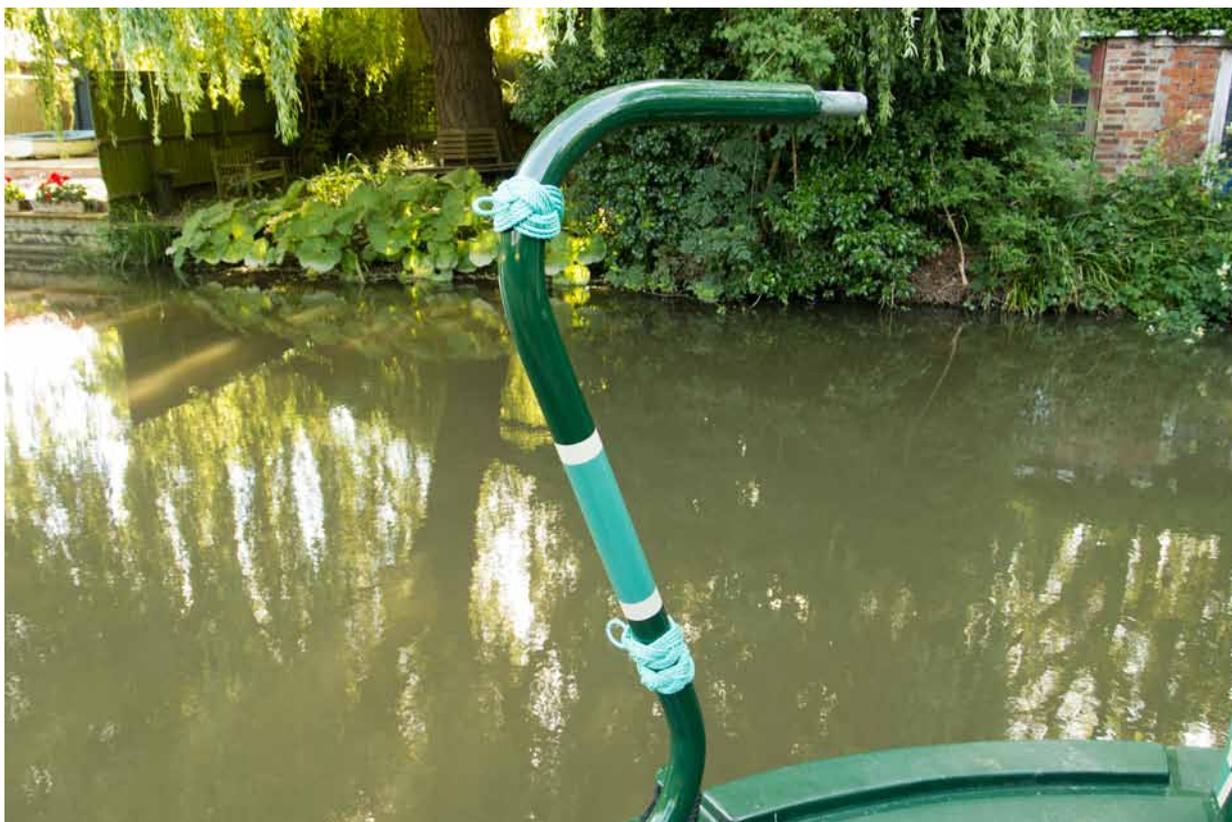
First Use of the Gangplank

Two days later we are number four in the queue for another lock: it only has one ground paddle to fill it. While on the look-out for oncoming traffic I realize that the boat that was moored up a little bit further on the canal, now is diagonal in the canal. But with nobody on the tiller! So in the end I help a guy in bathrobe to pull his boat back to the bank. Two of the three pins were taken out by a passing boat, while he was having a shower.

We find out that our gearbox seems to be leaking. Not a lot, so we think we'll manage to get back to home base with it.

And we find out that our cassette lasts 25% longer; thanks, Pat, for the tip. No, I'm not telling how we do that, just send me an email if you really want to know.

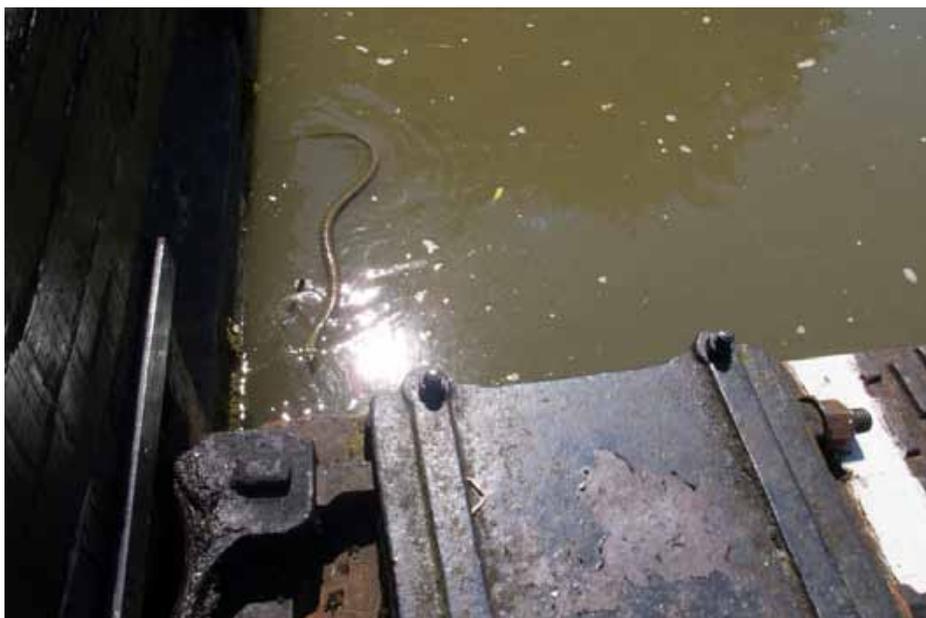
I also manage to make three Turks Heads.



Turks Heads

Two of them have an eye for attaching the flag of the person that's on the tiller for the day. The bottom two act as a protection for the tiller when opening the cover for the weed hatch/stern gland. Thanks, Fred, for the tip.

The Oxford Canal has too much weeds, and not enough water. Well, the lack of water doesn't affect us a lot, but all oncoming traffic gets grounded. At one sharp bend the oncoming boat (with a vintage engine, and cruising way too fast) just goes straight into the bank. I am on tick-over, and slam anchor as soon as I see him. I don't think there would have been anything left on shelves or in cupboards...



Snake in Lock

Sometimes one wonders if one is in the UK. One night we stop with view on the Rock of Gibraltar, and I even see a snake in a lock.



On the River Cherwell

We do our first river (Cherwell), trying to find out how to convert a coloured level indicator board into metres of head room.



Available Headroom

And I have to negotiate a diamond shape lock (without making a fool of myself).



Diamond Shaped Lock

It gets hotter and hotter; sometimes it's still 31°C inside the boat at 22:00 hrs. Where possible we sleep with both side doors open and have early starts (as early as 07:00 hrs) to beat the heat. I manage to get severe sunburn on my feet while on the tiller.

And all the time it feels like I'm on a morris event.



Banbury

Adderbury, Banbury, Kirtlington, Molly Oxford and Weeping Willow Tree cross my mind while on the tiller or doing the locks, on our way down the Oxford Canal to Oxford.



Oxford – First Mooring

## ISIS PIROUETTE – 25 JULY 2016

Oxford. Well, what should I say... Lots of wine, lots of good food, lots of miles to walk, lots of hours in museums, and the shortest cruising day ever (with two locks).



Oxford – Second Mooring

To start with this shortest cruising day: we go from one 48-hour mooring to another 48-hour mooring. Three quarter of a mile closer to the city centre. To do this we need to turn around. Which means we have to go on the river Thames.



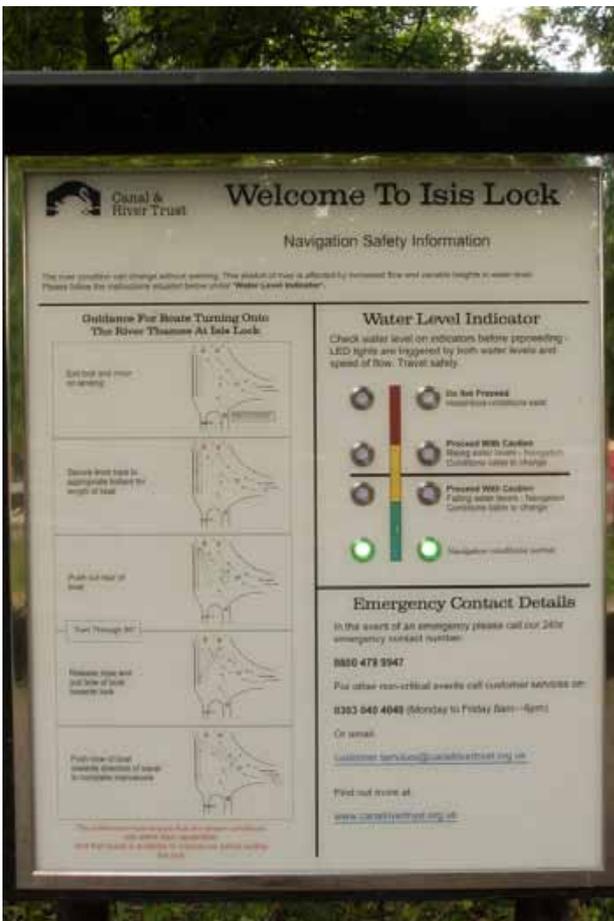
The River Thames

Which means Isis Lock.



Isis Lock

But we only turn around on that part of the river, and go straight back into the lock we just left. Still, to me that counts as two locks (for me, Lawrance is on the tiller).



Instructions and Notice Board

This second mooring is in Jericho, so did we go to Israel? No, don't worry, Jericho is a posh part of Oxford.



Jericho

According to the prices at a real estate agent, in Jericho a small house in a row costs double the amount of my big end-terrace house. And for the price of two cups of latte I can buy about four big jars of Douwe Egberts coffee (which would last me at least about four months).

And talking about being out of the country... while we're at The Punter (a pub on the Thames) with Ann and Mick, who are moored just outside the pub (as you can see), we think we're in Venice. Heaps of gondolas on the way home, all going into Osney Lock. No, we're NOT drunk (yet).



Venice?

While Lawrance does the laundry (and visits Mick and the pub on the way back) me and Ann spend five hours in the (combined) Museum of Natural History and Pitt Rivers. I already spent three hours in the Ashmolean Museum, apparently the oldest museum in the world.

We have a meal in three pubs. One is The Anchor, close to bridge 240. That's a waste of time and money. It's expensive, and just crap.

On Thursday we have a meal in The Perch, across Port Meadow. This is a perfect place, just as you imagine a country pub/restaurant should be. And the food is great.

The other meal is in the already mentioned Punter. Cheaper, but also very good.

Oh, and the fourth meal is at Ristorante WRT: Mushroom Risotto.

But every time I'm in a town or city I realize: I'd rather be in the country. So after five days we'll move again.

We're on our way home...

## CROPREDY FESTIVAL? – 02 AUGUST 2016

The first stop on our journey back home is Thrupp. At the Jolly Boatman we meet a couple and show them WRT. Only later we find out that he is Dutch. His comment?  
“Now I know why your boat looks so tidy!”

To leave Thrupp we have to go through the (electric) lift bridge. Lawrance is on the tiller, so I have to read my way through the instructions.

“Turn BW key clockwise – follow instructions on the screen.”

Needless to say that after five minutes the screen is still blanc. Someone helps me out: “Just push the buttons!”

At one of the locks I meet another Dutch couple, on their own boat. I do like the Dutch touch of the interior (well, what I can see from the outside at least).

One morning we find coolant in the engine bilge. It looks like the jubilee clip on the header tank was a bit loose. Lawrance tightens up the jubilee clip.

In Banbury we moor at bridge 168, to go to Morrisons. The Oxford Canal has too much weeds, not a lot of water, and next to no shops!



Banbury, near Morrisons

After two days we move to Banbury Centre. I want to buy a pair of shoes I've seen, last time we were here. This must be our hardest cruising day ever. Half a mile, with a lock and a lift bridge!

And the next evening, around 21:45 hrs we make use of the advantage of living on a boat: we move, two boats up, just under Tom Rolt bridge. To get away from the very, very loud base noise from the house party at the club-cum-gym. Time to leave the city.

We start earli-ish. But at the third lock, Slat Mill Lock, Lawrance notices the propeller is pulsating. So we stop. The amount of (clear) oil in the engine bilge tells us: gearbox. Yes, the gearbox is completely dry. After speaking to RCR, and to engineer Tom, we refill the gearbox, and Tom will meet us at Cropredy.

When filling up Lawrance realizes what the problem is: the filler level plug has only one thread left. At some time in the past (we think at Overwater Marina) someone broke the plug, and didn't bother to replace it. Just put it back in, with lock seal.



Gearbox Filler Level Plug Failure

Tom, the engineer, orders a new plug, and we moor up at the last free spot in Cropredy. It's already absolutely full, on the 24 hours moorings. And none of them is going to move, not before the 17th of August. They are all there for the Cropredy Festival. So we stay there as well. And if anybody causes troubles: we're broken down, and waiting for a part for the gearbox.



*Cropredy in the morning*

The filler level plug is sent to Cropredy Marina. We walk to the marina to collect it, Lawrance replaces the old plug, but we think that it is too late to leave that same day. While having supper at the Red Lion I see the guy from the Dutch boat again. Before we leave the pub I wish them a good cruise. In the end we all decide to moor up at Fenny Compton and have a meal together at The Wharf.

## DUBBEL DUTCH – 06 AUGUST 2016

After walking through Cropredy village with a full cassette (and no, I didn't put a black rubbish bag around it), we leave Cropredy at nine o'clock. Dubbel Dutch left even earlier.

It's warm, but also very windy. It's difficult to get off the bank into locks. And because it is so busy I have to moor up at every lock. So every lock is a struggle.

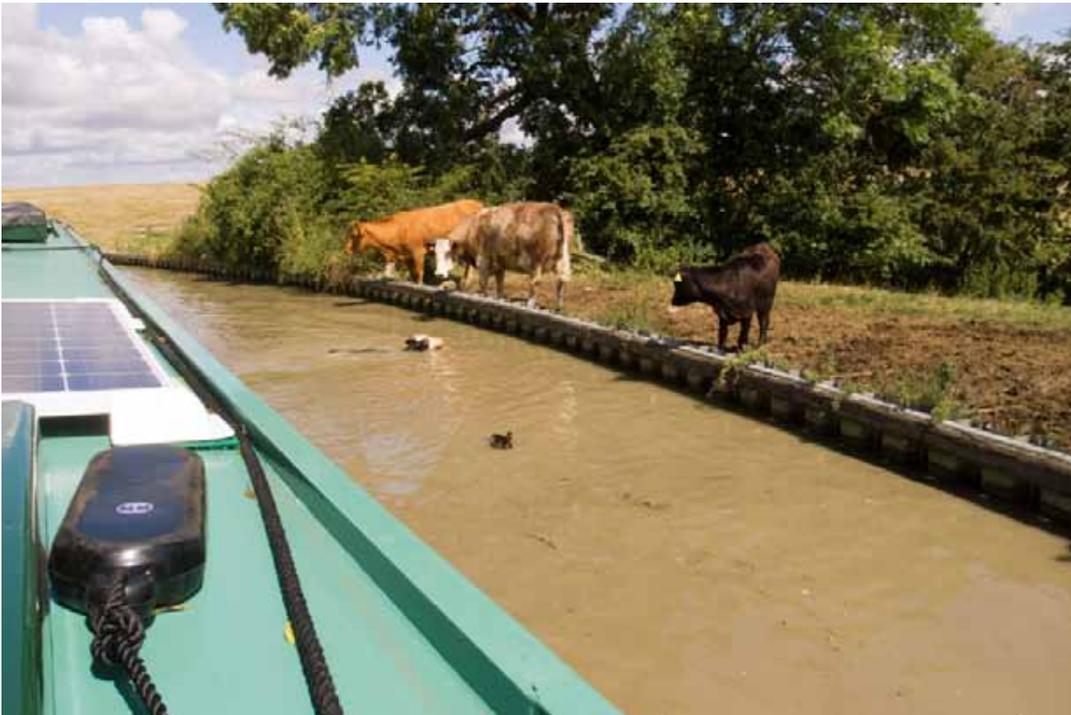
And, as per usual, the canal is very low. People now get grounded even in the middle of the canal. But around one o'clock we moor up at Fenny Compton, right behind Dubbel Dutch.



Dubbel Dutch

Dubbel Dutch is a very Dutch boat. While having a drink with Martin and Annemarie I only can admire the inside of the boat. A lot of Delft Blue, and other things that make me feel a bit homesick. I just HAVE to find ways to put some (hidden) Dutch accents into WRT...

Supper at The Wharf if followed by supper at the Folly at Napton, the following day. Again it is busy, and it takes us two hours, only to get through the first lock! It's very nice weather, and quite warm. Even a calf decides to go for a swim.



Other users of the Oxford Canal

But, as happened before, when cruising with the Dutch, in the end it starts raining heavily, and by the time we're moored up I'm soaked, being the windlassie.



Going to meet some Dutch again?

And although it is difficult to see on the picture, it's even more than double Dutch:

- 1 Half the crew of the narrowboat in front is Dutch
- 2 The crew of the narrowboat in the distance is completely Dutch
- 3 Above the narrowboat in the distance is, just visible on the hill, a Dutch type windmill.

Would that count for  $1 + 4 + 1 = 6$  Dutch? Hexadutch?

Before supper Martin and Annemarie come for a drink to WRT. They bring small Dutch porcelain wooden shoes, a real Dutch card and Dutch butter cookies called Grachtenpandjes.

At the Folly the landlord entertains us (well, the kids, Izaak and Kristine) with a couple of card tricks. Much later, after a look at the beautiful night sky, we call it a day.

## UNDER AND ON THE OXFORD CANAL – 13 AUGUST 2016

We leave Napton and Dubbel Dutch and are heading for Braunston. We need to go to Midland Chandlers to get some odds and sodds. I'm on the tiller.

First I get attacked by horseflies. Then, all the sudden, I'm covered in tiny little flies. They are all over the boat, and me. I need to take off my glasses, otherwise I can't wipe my face properly. And I need to see well. Just in a bend (of course) I get an oncoming wide beam!

At Braunston we wave goodbye to Dubbel Dutch, but we can't moor up. No space at Midland Chandlers, and no mooring space whatsoever: there is a Music Festival at the Admiral Nelson.

So we end up in Hillmorton. Close to where we had the hotel when visiting Crick Boat Show in 2014! This time we have supper at the Old Royal Oak, It's delicious and has a decent price.

Our next stop is Rugby. Moor at bridge 58, close to Tesco. We also visit Halfords for a mirror on a stick, and The Range for a mat (we lost our old one when trying to dry everything after the rain we had two days ago). We even manage to buy a fly curtain (and an extendable stick) for the front door.

Although it is very cold (half jeans (because it is sunny) plus polo + jumper + fleece) we have an easy cruise to Ansty. Early enough to make enquiries and to book things.

The next day we take a taxi to Ansty Golf Course. Tee-off time 10:30 hrs. We have a buggy, it's beautiful weather, an absolute delightful golf course... Is this not what it is all about?!! So after a stop at Nuneaton for shopping, laundrette, and a non-interesting museum, passing Hawkesbury Junction, we decide to stop at Atherton, which also has a golf course close to the canal.



Hawkesbury Junction

So that's where we are now, after topping up the water at Hartshill Yard, and seeing the first signs of autumn: falling leaves.



Hartshill Yard

And what about that Under the Oxford Canal, you ask? See this picture.



Under the Oxford Canal

Lawrance, in the buggy, under the canal. The golf course is on both side of the canal. With a bridge and an underpass to get to the tees.

And to give you the complete picture, this is the view from the towpath at the same point.



On the Oxford Canal Towpath

## **CONFESSION – 14 AUGUST 2016**

I think it's time for a confession. All the posts on this blog between the 5th of July and today... are written today. You really think I have time to write every second or third day? No way! Cruising down south is hard work, with all the locks, all the bends and all the hire boaters. Hardly time to take pictures. And meeting up with (old and new) friends doesn't help either. Plus I need a fully charged computer and 4G on Lawrance's phone to get anything done. So while waiting to go for a game of golf tomorrow at Atherstone Golf Club (*Monday Special = half price*) I take my chance. Six new posts...

## SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW – 18 AUGUST 2016

When you're in a truck, the only things you see is motorways and industrial estates. Being on a narrowboat is not that much different. The canals are the motorways of the past, and they used to go through...? Yes, industrial estates. Some of them are still there. Derelict, but impressive.



*The former Hat Factory*

Like the Wilson & Stafford hat factory, the last hat factory in Atherstone, closed in 1999. The building (right next to the canal) was due for demolition in 2008 in order to build flats, but for one reason or another this has not yet been carried out.



*Alvecote Priory*

Canals also go past other relics from the past. Alvecote Priory is one of them. Again right next to the canal. Both the hat factory and the Priory have no signs whatsoever. One could easily miss them. Even when moored just opposite from them.



Moored just opposite the Priory

Well, for a while, that is. Because when we go to something new we end up moving WRT. So what happens? After I visit the Priory we decide to have a drink in a pub called The Samuel Barlow.



The Samuel Barlow

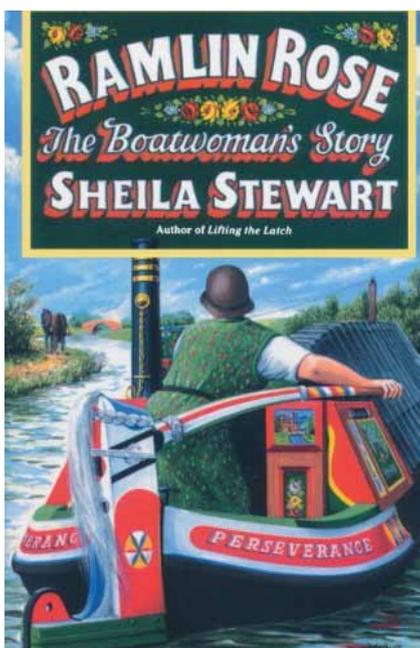
The pub is named after the coal merchant that owned the site, and started a canal trading business with two narrowboats, carrying coal from the Warwickshire coalfields to London and the River Thames. And who are moored opposite the pub? Pat and Stephen! So we move the boat, and the rest is history.

Oh, yes, I forget to mention. We do play golf at Atherstone Golf Course. I lose more balls than there are holes; a very tough but very nice course.



Waiting for the taxi

Of course we hire a buggy, but don't worry, I get my work out when we leave Atherstone the next day: eleven locks! Although I must admit: they are easy to operate, and the scenery is absolutely wonderful. My reward, after all these locks? A visit to the most amazing antiquarian book store I'll ever go to: Chester's Antiquarian Bookshop in Polesworth. After entering the shop it takes me ten minutes to close my mouth and start breathing again. That is the effect their 45,000 books have on me (being limited to less than 100 books...).



I manage to get a copy of Ramling Rose, a book about a boatwoman (the copy is even signed by the author). And five more canal related books.

We spend a night at Hopwas, where we are moored right between two pubs (The Red Lion and The Tame Otter) but prefer a delicious indoor Salmon and Savory Rice.



Two days? Or 48 hours?

Half of WRT can stay 48 hours, the other half two days. Not knowing how to interpret these signs the right way, we decide to leave after 18.5 hours, pass some well-known canal places like Fazely Junction and Fradley Junction and moor up at Alrewas. Tomorrow we'll go on a non-canal-related trip.

## THE RIGHT WEATHER – 23 AUGUST 2016

It's a dark, rainy day (the shape of things to come) when we visit the National Memorial Arboretum. The Arboretum is an evolving, maturing woodland landscape featuring 30,000 trees and a vast collection of memorials. The 150-acre site is a living, growing tribute to those who have served and continue to serve the UK, and allied countries.

Of course Lawrance visits the memorial for his regiment. There is only one memorial that has some relevance for me: The Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces National Memorial. The battlefield of Oosterbeek and Operation Market Garden are just a few miles from my former house in Holland.



Pegasus

Two days later we leave Alrewas, pass Fradley Junction again, on our way to Rugeley, Weston-on-Trent and Stone.

At Fradley Junction it is still overcast, and the weather forces me to get my waterproof jacket out.



Fradley Junction before the rain

Rugeley is already a little bit better.



Rugeley

Weston-on-Trent at 7 o'clock in the morning gives us a feeling of what to expect in Stone.



Early hours at Weston-on-Trent

The weather is just too nice to go any further than Stone. We manage to get a mooring just after the lock. The lock that is just between a pub (The Star) and a restaurant.



Moored, not written, in Stone

We end up drinking till very late, with Sheila, Dave and Michael, boaters we met while going through the three locks.

We're impressed with the weather. Clear blue skies and a hot day would have been out of order when visiting the Memorial Arboretum, and a dark, rainy day would have been a waste, moored up at Stone. (Rain would have been healthier, though...)

## JOY AND DISAPPOINTMENT – 27 AUGUST 2016

No, the title is not about boating. It's about ceramics. China, porcelain, tableware, whatever you want to call it. And the bottle kiln, the ovens that produced the products.



Bottle Kilns

Ever seen a 250 years history of tableware? I do, and it is impressive. From cups and plates of 1760 via the dinner sets my friends used to have in the 1980's to the modern tableware of this century. I see it in The Wedgwood Museum in Barlaston. And thanks to Josiah Wedgwood, the founder of the Wedgwood company, I am able to visit Barlaston by narrowboat. Because transporting finished pottery by horse and cart results in a lot more breakage than transport it by narrowboat. So Josiah made sure the Trent & Mersey Canal would run right to his factory.

I spend an entire day in The World of Wedgwood. First we see part of the museum. Then go on a factory tour to see how they make it nowadays, and, after lunch, when Lawrance decides he has seen enough cups and plates, I go back to the museum.

Definitely worth the visit.



Beautiful things

Three days later I'm in another pottery museum, in Stoke-on-Trent: The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery. And no, don't stop in Stoke-on-Trent just to visit this museum, it's NOT WORTH it. I only spend one hour inside, and most of that time I spend looking at the twenty worst pieces of the Staffordshire Hoard and walking around the Spitfire, a Mark XVI model, with number RW 388. Which can only be seen from a very great distance.



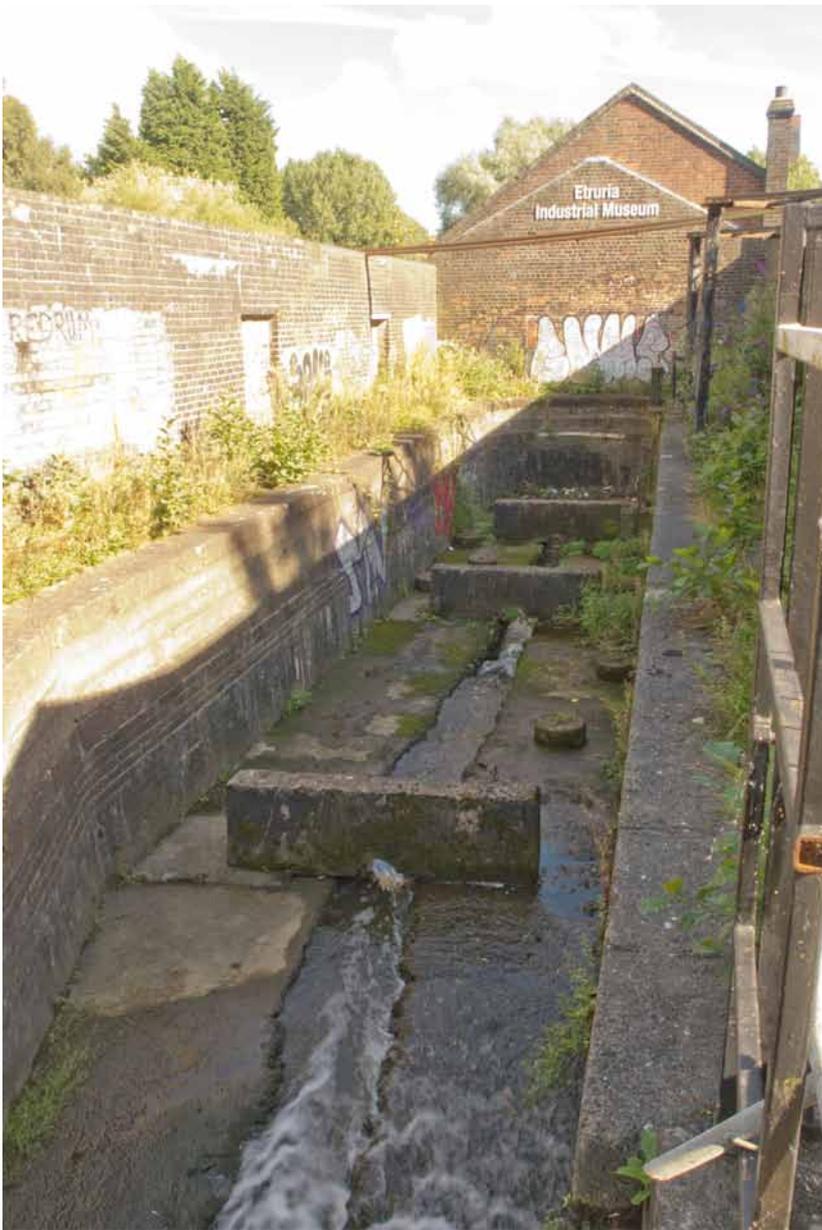
Mooring at Etruria

We're actually moored very close to the Etruria Industrial Museum. Another museum in Stoke-on-Trent not worth stopping for: it's not open for the public (except on Steaming Weekends, which are held only five times a year).



Etruria Industrial Museum

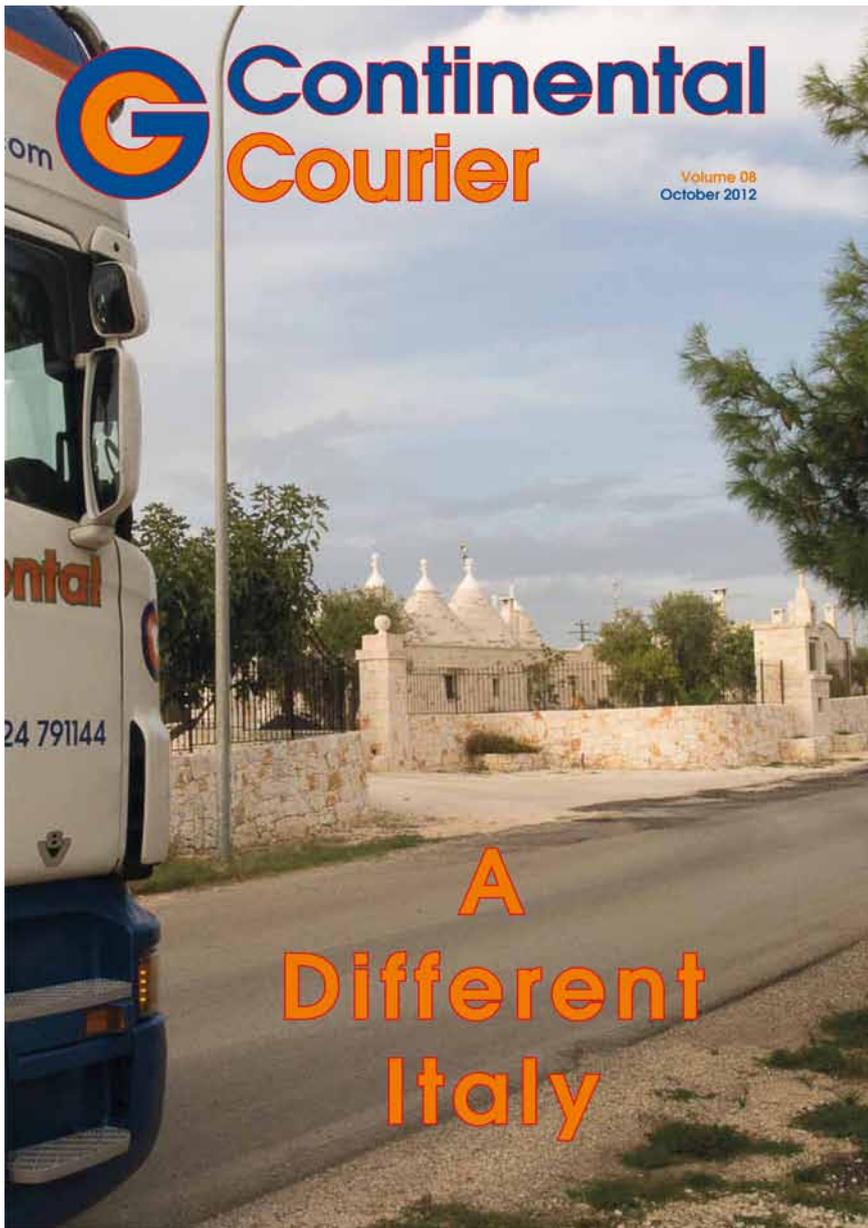
In fact, the most interesting thing here I only saw by accident: the Graving Dock, a dock used by the canal authorities to gauge new boats before they were allowed onto the canals. Boats were floated into the dock and circular weights were loaded onto them. The water level was then marked on the bow of the boat.



The Graving Dock

Other than that, it rains, the batteries are not charging properly (due to trees, hanging over the boat?), we went under a few VERY LOW bridges on our way to Stoke-on-Trent (with about an inch headroom to spare) and the Art Gallery of the Pottery Museum was not worth the visit either...

P.S. The bottle kilns remind me of a house called a trullo. We've seen them in Alberobello, on one of our trips to Southern Italy.



Bottle kiln, with garden and swimming pool?

What I wrote then:

We're nowhere near an industrial estate, we're in the middle of an area full of very posh villas. Most of them of a typical shape. They remind us of kilns, but kilns usually don't have large gardens with a swimming pool. Loading a 20 container and a tea-handler (whatever that is) somewhere here? No way!

## LOCK STRIPPING – 31 AUGUST 2016

Although we're leaving the Potteries, it's still potteries all around us, for a while. Kilns, factories, museums.



All in one

Then it is about to get dark. Very dark. And very noisy. Tuinkabouter, the little guy with the red pointed hat inside the life belt, is a bit nervous. It's **Harecastle Tunnel**, 2,926 yards or 2,675 metres long, with low headroom at certain places, and HAUNTED!



Harecastle Tunnel

I'm not worried. I will actually find out, going through Harecastle Tunnel, that I like tunnels. Thirty-five minutes we're in the tunnel, and when we come out it feels like only five minutes. Being not too tall means that I don't have to bother with low headroom. The only thing that bothers me is the BRIGHT LIGHT at the end of the tunnel. It's blinding.

Inside the tunnel it also is a bit cold. Especially with the extraction fan's on full power. They are noisy as well.

I'm already looking forward to our small tunnels (Barnton, Saltersford and Preston Brook)...!



Low water level

But before we will get there we'll have a lot more locks to negotiate, as well as very hot weather, lack of water, and Gary checking our fire. By then we are safe back in good old Middlewich.



Good old Middlewich

And what about the title of this post, I hear you say?

Well, when doing the lock I usually start with polo or T-shirt, jumper and fleece. At every lock I strip a layer, because the outside temperature rises, and I'm doing hard work.

What happens when I do a flight of 21 locks?

Nothing, the stripping stops at the appropriate moment...!

## DOES ANDERTON LIFT BOATS? – 06 SEPTEMBER 2016

We're on familiar territory now. So we think we're in for a couple of boring days. But cruising is never boring. There is a lot of traffic on the canal.



Traffic on the canal

As well as in the canal.



Traffic in the canal – part 1

And one wonders: does Anderton ever lift boats?



Traffic in the canal – part 2

I'm joined on the boat by hundreds of illegals.



Illegals

And there are delicious meals to enjoy.



Delicious meals

We finally have roses on the back doors (castles will be a future project).



Roses, but no castles (yet)

After Plank Lane Lift Bridge (operated by CRT because it is broken down) we get stuck behind someone who's either drunk, high, not a full shilling, or every possible combination of this. He cruises so slow that at a certain point I can but shout: "Can you please speed up?"



Plank Lane (doesn't) Lift Bridge

But there are rewards as well. Three tunnels (oh, I just love tunnels...), coffee at Black Prince at Acton Bridge, meals with family at Stockton Heath, and the prospect of a visitor tomorrow.

No, boating is never boring.

## FINALLY...! – 08 SEPTEMBER 2016 – by WRT

Over 2½ years we've been in contact, mostly via social media. We've kept each other informed about our adventures. But we never met...

But finally we do. On the 7th of September 2016, in Wigan. Around midday Swansong moors herself just in front of me.



*Me and Swansong in Wigan*

After kisses and hugs we immediately start yapping, while Ian, Magda and Lawrance go into town for messages and a cup of coffee on a street-side terraces. I listen to all her travels, being a bit jealous, I must admit.

When both crews are away for a meal at Franco's I tell her that Magda doesn't want to go on a river without an anchor, that I won't be able to go through Standegde Tunnel because I'm too tall to get there, that I'm forced to sit in a marina for 6 months because they think they need a car and a home address.

She then tells me that she sometimes could do without a skipper who thinks he needs to do something scary ever so often. Because he's not the one who has to try to stay afloat on tidal rivers, or needs to squeeze between these big ocean going ships that create waves even higher than she is.

We just continue gossiping about our crews; they are away till late anyway. And tell us later that, after a delicious meal at Franco's, they went to Wigan Central, which they think is a train station, but in fact is just a pub. See what Swansong and me have to deal with?

And we've got an idea what awaits us tomorrow: The Wigan Flight. But I manage to calm down Swansong. The plans are to get us breasted up and then one of the three will be the steerer. I ask Swansong to think logically: Who will be doing the locks? So who will be on the tiller? Exactly, we'll be very safe in the gentle hands of Magda.





Last lock before the flight

After the first couple of locks, I realize: this won't be an easy day. The third pond is nearly empty. To have a chance to make it, we're separated again. I'm out first, but won't get any further than my stern deck: I get stuck on the cill. Ian, who thinks he can do better, slowly but surely... parks Swansong on the cill as well. When he finally manages to get Swansong over the cill, she gets stuck in the middle of the pond. We just have to wait until there is enough water in the pond.



Swansong stuck

Because the next pond is more ore less the same, the crew first check the weed hatch, and then have their lunch: in the lock.



Wiping our delicate parts

Then lunch. Hope they did wash their hands first...



Lunch

Then we're breasted up again, and negotiate the rest of the flight. With enough water, and Magda as skipper, it's a very pleasant experience.



*In gentle hands*

OK, I stick my nose where I probably should not, and saying that we carry a lot of rubbish between us, is not me speaking rubbish.



*Nosy?*



Rubbish

After six hours, 5½ hours of cruising, we get separated again.  
We moor up at Wigan Top Lock.



*Almost there*

It takes us a while to get Magda off. No, not off the tiller, off her high horse. Did she really think she had any influence with that tiller?

No, as per usual it was me and Swansong who did all the work. But they will never understand...

## NIAGARA FALLS – 12 SEPTEMBER 2016

After we wave goodbye to Swansong and Ian, we start the last stages of this year's adventure.

With nobody to help us, and nobody to join with, we have to do the Wigan Flight on our own. Me on the tiller, Lawrance doing the locks.

The locks are as hard as four days ago, some of the ponds are again very low on water, and the locks didn't suddenly change shape or size.

But going down with a 60 ft narrowboat is more difficult than going up steering two breasted up narrowboats. Did WRT get a clean nose in most of the locks? Well, that same amount of water falls just on the stern deck, when one is in the lock the opposite way around. And because we never bother to clean the drains under the stern deck, all that water goes straight into the bilge. After three locks I decide to stop. We have to pump out the boat now, or we'll end up with a 60 ft indoor swimming pool.



Niagara Falls

Bilge empty, drains cleaned I manage to steer away from the worst waterfalls, while I'm in the lock. Trying not to let the Wigan Manneke Pis\* pee straight into the engine vents.

At Lock 75 we get help from CRT. They have to. The lock door is in such a state that it needs three strong guys to open and close it. They also tell us that there is a boat behind us. With a volunteer! So we decide to wait for them, and we start our lunch. When, after an hour, there is still no boat in sight, we just go on, on our own.

Once in Wigan we call it a (cruising) day. We still have to pump out the boat (again), and Crooke is another four locks away. Tomorrow is another day.

\***Manneke Pis**: a small bronze sculpture in Brussels, depicting a naked little boy urinating into a fountain's basin.



Manneke Pis

## CONVOI EXCEPTIONNEL – 14 SEPTEMBER 2016

It's a beautiful day. The sun is shining, it's hot already when we start our final stage. Home tonight?

Well, maybe not. Just as we come out of Pagefield Lock we see two breasted up boats, and a man and a woman with both a rope in their hand. The usual greeting around here is: "Are you doing all right?" And since it also means just what it says, we get an answer: "No. Not really." So we can but stop.



Broken Down

It never rains, it pours. Two boats go out cruising to Lymm. One boat breaks down, so they decide to go back home. They turn around, and just after Pagefield Lock the second boat breaks down. And yes, if we could tow them to Crooke, that would be very helpful.

Me and Doreen start walking, to do the next locks, while Lawrance tows the two boats, and talks to Allan. We both find out that these boats are moored at the Slipway. Are we not going past the Slipway? Yes, and both me and Lawrance decide: we just tow them to the Slipway. We might be home a day later, but there is no problem with that.



Convoy Exceptionnel

Towing the two breasted up boats is going OK until... under one bridge the cruiser jumps against the bridge and the upper structure gets a bit damaged. Not a problem as such. The wood was rotten anyway, and Allan had already ordered a new frame. In order to prevent more damage, I suggest to breast WRT and the cruiser up, and tow the narrowboat.



Our Butty

That works fine. For cruising, that is. Not for getting on the towpath to do locks and swingbridges. I do manage to jump off the boats... but I never manage to jump back on! So in the end I walk 7½ mile, from Ell Meadow Lock to The Slipway. And did I say it was nice and sunny? Somewhere down the line it gets dark, and it starts to rain. As I said, it never rains, it pours. Cruising through a swingbridge with his convoy exceptionnel, Lawrance manages to get my waterproof jacket and throw it to me. Nice, but I'm already soaked. Luckily it is not cold, there is no wind, so I basically enjoy it. Especially when, during part of one of the thunderstorms the sun shines just through a gap in the clouds, straight onto a tree-turning yellow. The black sky, thunder all around me, and that golden tree... Magic!

Of course I walk a lot faster than the three boats are cruising. So I'm the first at The Slipway. With my BW key, but without money. Luckily Allan already phoned the pub, so when they realize what I just did, I immediately got a beer.

At 20:15 hrs, it's dark already, I see in the distance one white light, with a green and a red light next to it. I realize: we should have had our orange flashing light on the roof...!

Although the kitchen closes at 8 o'clock, we still get a meal (the kitchen staff is outside the pub, just as everybody else, to welcome the convoy).

Well done, Lawrance, and certainly WRT!



The next day, with the narrowboat still attached to WRT, we, and the boat across from us, face the next problem: the swing bridge at The Slipway doesn't open.



Next Problem

When CRT arrives at noon, we're finally off.



Solved (for now?)

Have to do two more swing bridges, and then, experienced as I am now, I flawlessly moor WRT at our own jetty. Although we have some discussion if we really are at the right jetty. Peppermint Patty seems further away from us than when we started, in Februari. Right, she moved up.

Mail collected, chairs out, meal at the New Scarisbrick Arms.

HOME AGAIN

## BACK TO UNLIMITED RESOURCES AGAIN – 26 SEPTEMBER 2016

A **water point** at the front door, **240V power** whenever we want it, an **Elsan point** in view, **yarn shops** all around, a **car** to go to Tesco, mooring rings that fit the length of WRT, gale force winds... We're back at Scarisbrick Marina!

Been here for a while, to be honest. Because with all the unlimited resources we have here, one got definitely very limited: **time**. Birthday parties and AGM's to attend, neighbours to yap with, boats to wash, polish, and touch-up, dental appointments, and last but not least, it gets dark here very early.

But today it's raining, so the perfect day to catch up with the blog. Everything between the 14th of August and today is written today (l'histoire se répète, I know). I don't really have anything else to say about today.

## **ITOLDYOU – 28 SEPTEMBER 2016**

Did I say that all the posts between the 14th of August and the 26th of September were written on the 26th? Eh, that was a bit of a lie. I still had to write four posts. Why did I not do that yesterday?

Well, a hairdressers appointment, and a visit to the beautician, plus a meeting with a new member of the committee of the Boatersclub, and having to prepare the evening meal... just fills the entire day.

So if you did read some of the posts already, have another look. There might be some more posts.

If not, then the only thing you still need from me is the statistics page and the map. Oh yes, and a new picture for the blog, with WRT in her new clothes.

I'll keep you informed.

## STATISTICS – 29 SEPTEMBER 2016



Big trip 2016

Yes, the old trucker's route program still comes in handy. At least I can see now where I've been...  
But first the statistics. Without the time spent in the caravan at Swanley, of course.

Days out minus paint time	159
Cruising days	85
Cruising every	1.87 day
Cruising time	351 hours
Cruising hours per day	4.13
Total miles	585
Miles per day	6.88
Miles per days out	3.68
Locks per day	5.99
Bridges per day	0.34
Shortest day	00:30 Banbury to Banbury
Longest cruising day	10:45 hrs Wigan to Slipway

Now the weird part.

From Scarisbrick Marina to Stourport via Nantwich and Stafford is 3 hrs 25 min by car.

It took us 23 days/105 hrs cruising.

From Stratford-on-Avon to Oxford is 1 hr by car. It took us 16 days/61 hrs cruising.

From Oxford to Scarisbrick Marina is 2 hrs 50 min by car. It took us 28 days/130 hrs cruising.

From the DW Stadium to The Slipway is 29 min by car. It took us almost 11 hrs.

And even weirder.

We cruised for 85 days, with an average of 4.13 cruising hours per day.

If we had spent that much time in a car, doing 100 km/h, we would have travelled

$85 * 4.13 * 100 \text{ km} = 35,105 \text{ km}$ . So we nearly did a trip around the world, the circumference at the equator being 40,075 km.

And starting at Ormskirk, while staying at the same latitude, we would have gone around the world almost 1,5 times. Because the circumference of the earth at the latitude of Ormskirk is (equatorial circumference) \*  $\cos(L) = 40,075 * \cos(53.568935) = 40,075 * 0.5938552 = 23,798 \text{ km}$ .

And what did we, lazy bastards, do? Only a lousy 585 miles, or 941 km.

And now for the weirdest.

The maximum speed for a truck is 56 miles per hour. A maximum driving day for a lorry driver is 10 hours. So Lawrance could have done this in just over one day...! In certain circumstances Lawrance would have classed that as a relaxing day.

Can you imagine the problems I have to grasp our travels? To realize where I am, in relation to car distances,

distances I'm more used to?

Take, for example the little village of Brewood. It's about 5 km south of Wheaton Aston, or about an hour cruising. On the 27th of April we cruise from Wheaton Aston to Coven. When we walk into the village of Coven I notice the name of the road we're walking on: Brewood Road.

Yep, it's the same Brewood. From the bridge over the canal at Brewood to the bridge over the canal at Coven took us roughly from 10:15 hrs till 15:15 hrs.

By car it's only eight minutes. OK, I got stuck in the stop lock at the end of the Shropshire Union Canal, had to slow down because of the narrows, and got grounded next to the dredger in the Staff & Worcs Canal. So it is a relatively hard and long day, but I'm still only nine kilometres (as the crow flies) away from Wheaton Aston.

And I'm not doing some of the previous calculations for days away, instead of actual cruising days. Because we were away for 159 days, so  $159 * 4.13 * 100 = 65,667$  km. Five of these years would have taken us to the moon. With our way of cruising, the moon would take us  $238,900/3.68 = 64,918$  days by narrowboat. Roughly 178 year...

It just doesn't make sense.

## GOING FOR A PUMP-OUT – 01 OCTOBER 2016

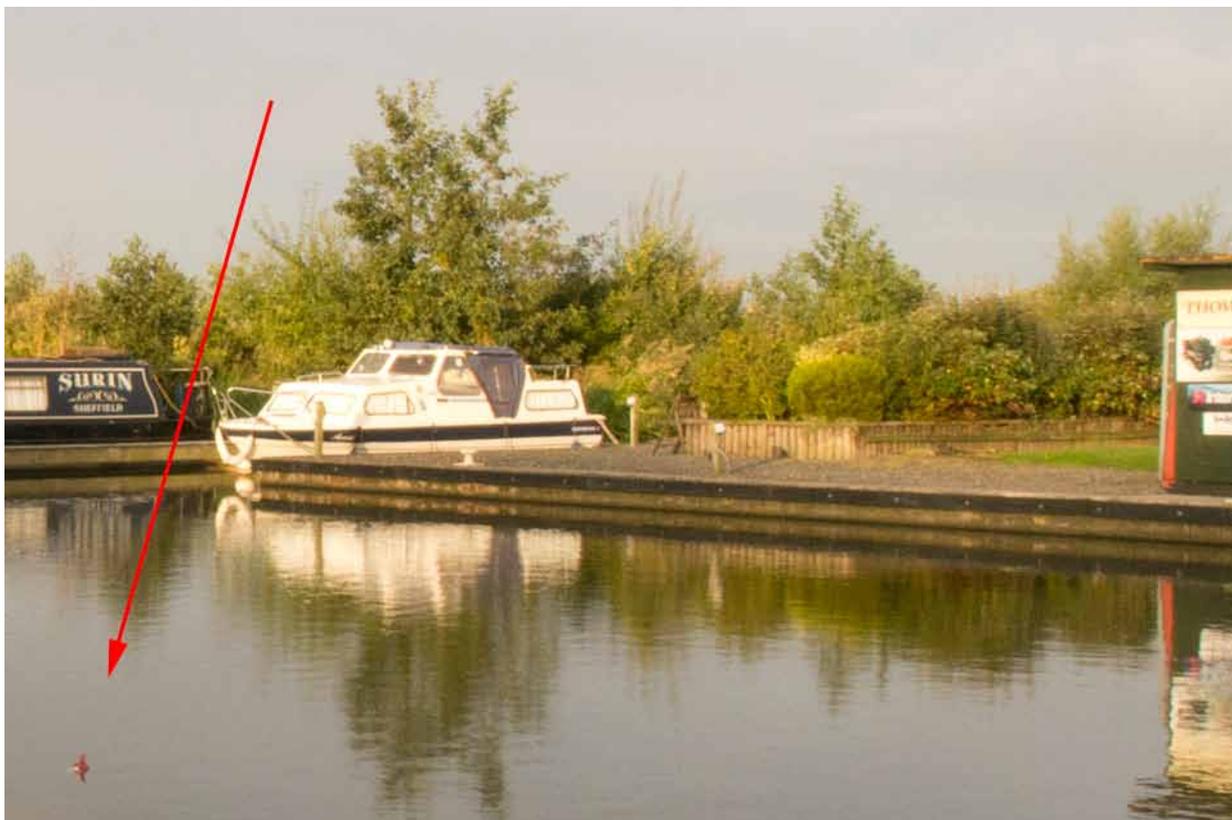
Remember Tuinkabouter, the little garden gnome that was a bit nervous about Harecastle Tunnel? Last week, when we had the gale force winds, he decided to go for a cruise. I didn't think that was a good idea, but you know what garden gnomes are like. Before I could talk him out of it, he was gone. Expecting him never to come back, I felt a bit sad; he'd been with us for ages.

This morning, while having a cigarette in the conservatory, I see something red, floating in the middle of the marina. Things floating in the marina tend to look like ducks or coots. Or water hens. But usually they don't have red, pointed hats. So I decide to go for a walk to the other side of the pond.



*Going for a pump-out*

And guess? It's Tuinkabouter, heading for the shed to have a pump-out! He's definitely on tick-over, it takes him quite a while to get near (where's the wind when you need it?).



Tuinkabouter Afloat

After he went overboard I was hoping he would float, but we didn't see him in the waves. And if he would sink, the magnet would not be of any help either.

But he's back. **Welcome home, Tuinkabouter!**

## WIDE BEAM FINALLY DELIVERED – 13 OCTOBER 2016

Well, what do you think?



Finally delivered

Finally she got delivered to the marina. She's 60 ft, and she's gorgeous. Al singing and dancing, and heaps of space inside.

On the picture you can see the old crane, that took her off the trailer. In front of the boat you see Dave, the driver who took her to the marina on his truck. He's shaking hands with...?

So who is the guy next to Dave? He looks like Lawrance, but why are they shaking hands? First thing that comes to mind: we bought a wide beam. And just got it delivered to Scarisbrick Marina. But Lawrance could also have started a new job: crane driver. Puzzling, isn't it?

Think again. Does Scarisbrick Marina have an old crane like that? The answer is: NO.

Do we need more space? I know I can steer a wide beam (see *Finally*). But would we sell our beloved WRT for a bl\*\*\*y wide beam? The answer (again) is: NO!!!

It actually very simple. Dave is our backdoor neighbour in the marina. He's a lorry driver, delivering boats all over the UK. For a delivery in Milton Keynes he needed a second man. Wide beams are wide, and, in this case, long as well. And guess who acted as second man? Yes, Lawrance. Just to see what he is (not?) missing, now he is retired.

So the alarm set for 4:30 am, leaving Scarisbrick Marina at 6:00 am. Being in the Saturday shopping traffic. Does he miss his old job? The answer, once again, is: NO.

In the mean time the weather here is still very fine. We have the most gorgeous sun sets.



Sunset

And it's still warm enough to walk around in polo shirt. Giving me the chance to polish WRT. So far I've done the back, and the port side of the boat.



Polishing Port Side

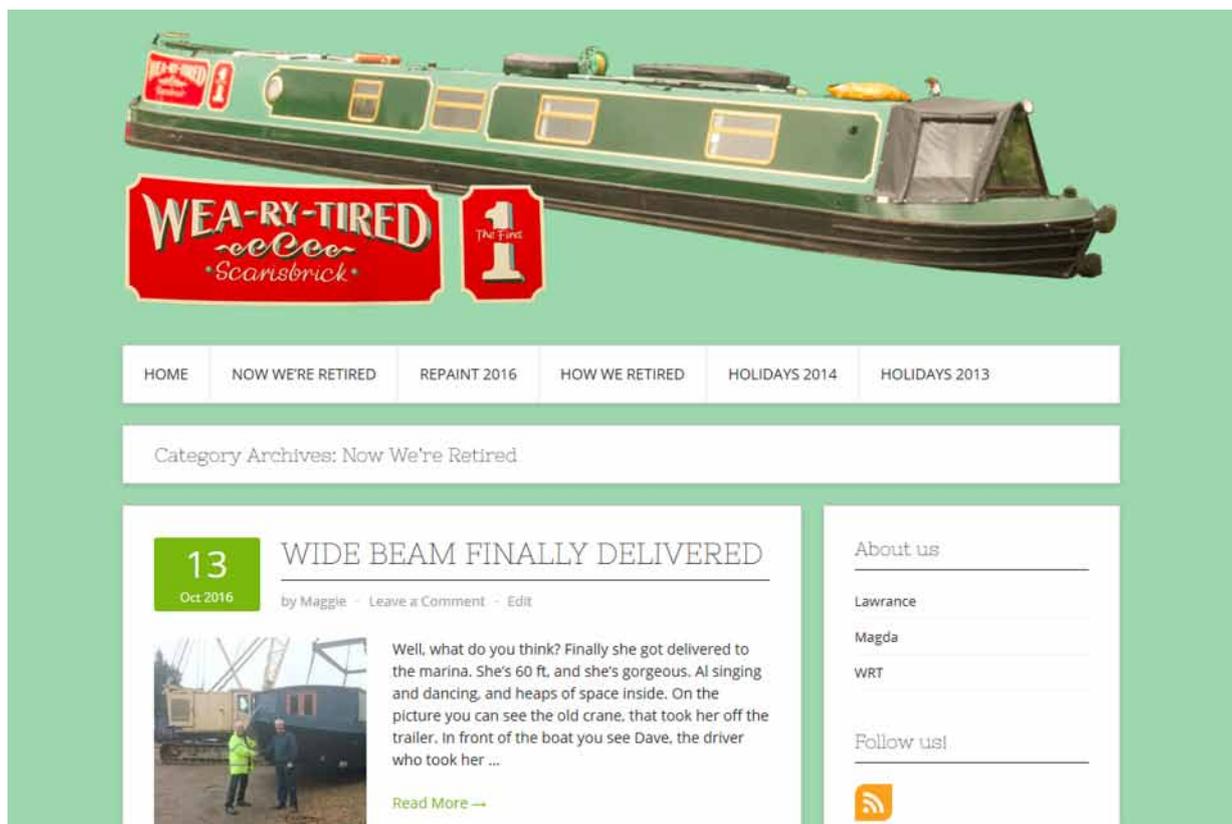
I could leave the polish on; I do like the pattern...



Nice Pattern

But without it she looks absolute brand new. And luckily for me the farmer next to the marina finally got a 'gun' to get the 21,309,741 geese away from the field. Geese that like to turn all narrowboats in the marina brown... So today WRT has to turn around again (she's getting dizzy from all this turning), and I will polish starboard side and roof.

And that will be WRT ready for the harsh winter that's predicted.



Weblog

I know, all of you wonder why it took me so long to write a new post. To be honest, I was wondering as well.

One would think: a day in the marina is the same as a non-cruising day during cruising time. But no, that is certainly NOT the case.

Some figures.

We were out cruising for 159 days. On 85 days we actually moved from A to B. So we had 74 non-cruising days. Lawrance was away during 19 days, that leaves 55 days. We (or I) spent at least 7 days in a museum. And we played golf twice. So 46 days we spent doing this, that and the other.

During these 46 days I wrote 40 posts. That's 0.93 post per day.

We've been back in Scarisbrick Marina for 62 days, and I wrote five posts. That's an average of 0.08 posts per day, less than a tenth...

OK, we don't venture into unknown territory, so there is less to write about. But I have a feeling that this is not the reason for not writing. It's something else, and I think I know what it is.

A day in the marina is the same as a day not cruising. We're moored up, and have all the time in the world to ourselves.

And this is where the thinking goes wrong.

You make friends, while cruising. But you see them for a day or two, and that's it. These friends don't knock on your boat with a jar of bread starter, more or less forcing you to start making your own bread again. Which then leads to making one's own yoghurt. And when they drop some cookbooks, saying: "Have a look at these", you end up trying out all kinds of new recipes (after an extra trip to Tesco to buy some exotic ingredients). These friends also don't write books (well, maybe they do, but you wouldn't know). Books that are so good that they deserve to be published. And of course it's me who's doing the editing of the books, and turn them into an e-book. Which takes some time, when it's a 200-plus page book...

Emptying the cassette means just that, not a short walk and chatting to (at least) ten people you meet. Nobody wants you to go to the gym together, walking between the locks and doing the locks is the free, outdoor gym while cruising.

I really think it's all the people here, that make my day last only a couple of hours. There is hardly any time between getting up, breakfast, lunch, supper and going to bed. Should we give up spending winter in a marina and become continuous cruisers\*?

\***Continuous cruisers:** a boat without a home mooring, that must be on a continuous journey, mostly in one direction, from one place to another. It must travel at least 15-20 miles a year to be able to get this kind of license.

## LIVERPOOL AND SOURDOUGH BREAD – 16 NOVEMBER 2016

It's Saturday, the 22th of October, when a beautiful decorated WRT (red and white roses) leaves Scarisbrick Marina.



*Beautiful Decorated*

We're on our way towards Liverpool. With a stop at the New Scarisbrick Arms, where we will cheer when shortboat Kennet goes past (on her way from Leeds to Liverpool) and where we will attend the Boatersclub Breakfast. With us are Rorah (with Ann and Mick) and Tin Lizzie (with Bill).



*Waiting for Kennet*

It's late when Kennet finally passes The New Scarisbrick Arms (and us). But cheer we do. And blow horns. And ring bells.



Kennet (finally)

After an (as per usual) delicious meal on the Saturday night, and a full English breakfast on the Sunday everybody in the boaterclub goes back to the marina, except for us.



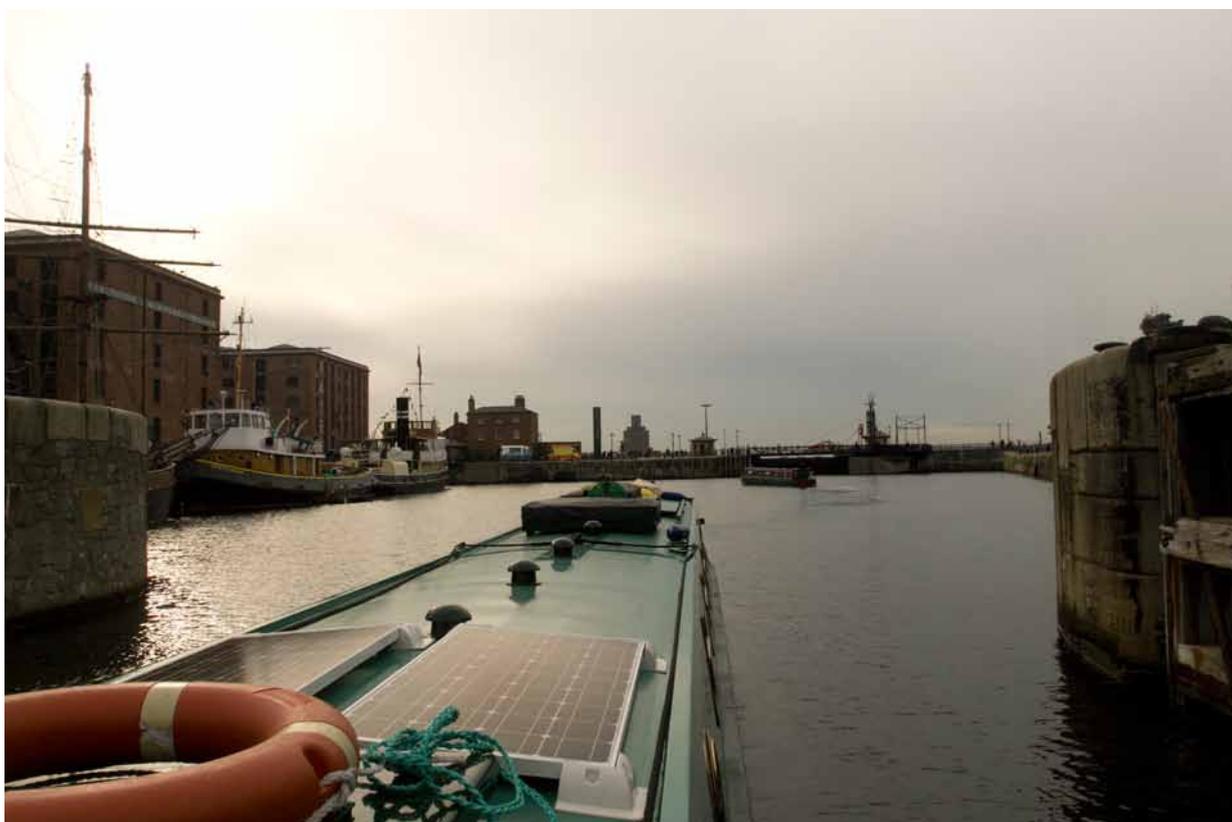
Meat (but not as we know it)

We resume our westerly course towards Liverpool.



Towards Liverpool

After a stop at Litherland we are just in time at the Stanley Locks. After that it's the ocean-liner-feeling again.



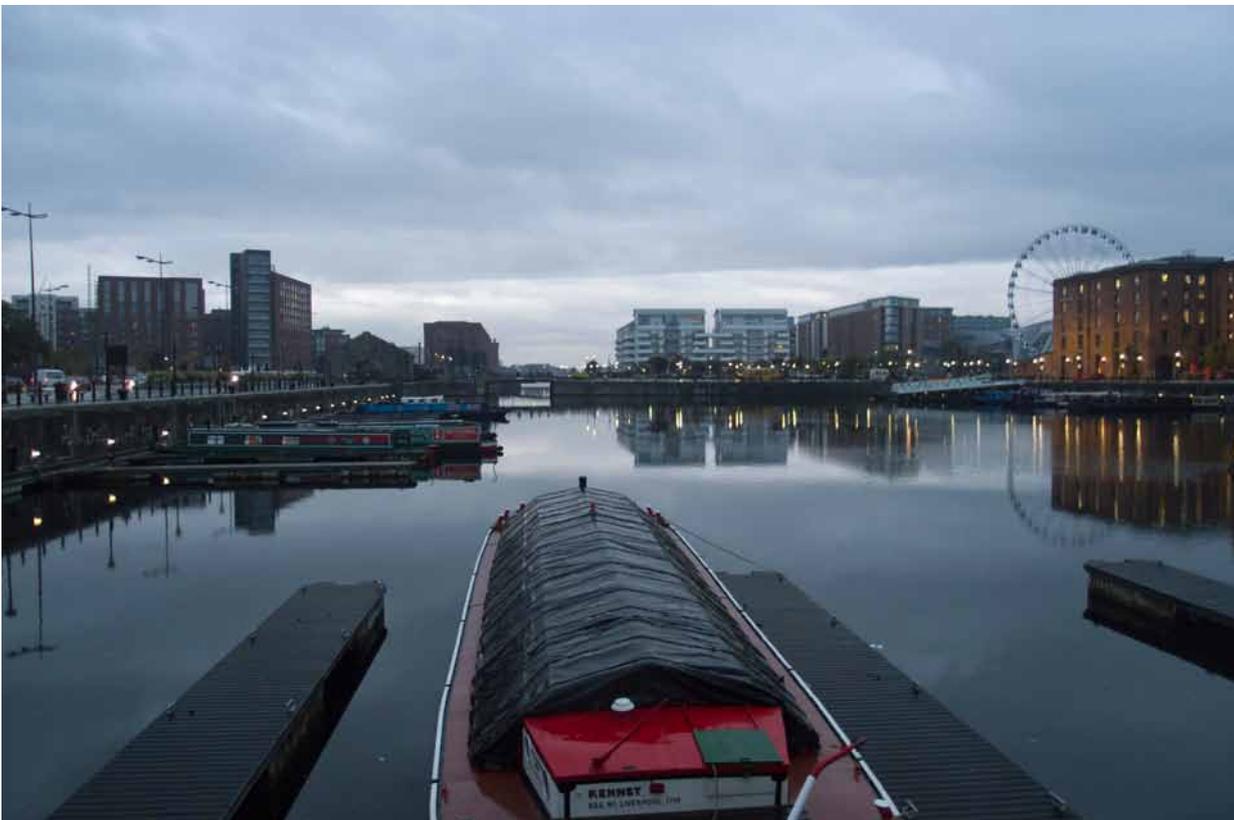
Canning Dock Liverpool

Three days we spent in Liverpool. Unfortunately it's children's holiday again, so museums and town are packed with families and (screaming) children.



Salthouse Dock

But we manage. And guess who's there as well?



Kennet again

On the Thursday we start heading back to home base.



Stanley Locks

We stop for the night at bridge 10, where WRT tries to run away...

Lawrance does the bridge, I'm on the tiller, and just as I jump off to moor up after the bridge the wind starts blowing like hell. And off she goes, to the other side of the canal. I can hold her 18 ton under normal circumstances, but not with a force 12 wind. Luckily for me there is a couple, walking on the towpath...

The next night it's New Scarisbrick Arms again.



New Scarisbrick Arms again

Back in the marina we fuel up, for the last time this year. And start preparing ourselves for a long, dark winter.



Home for the winter?

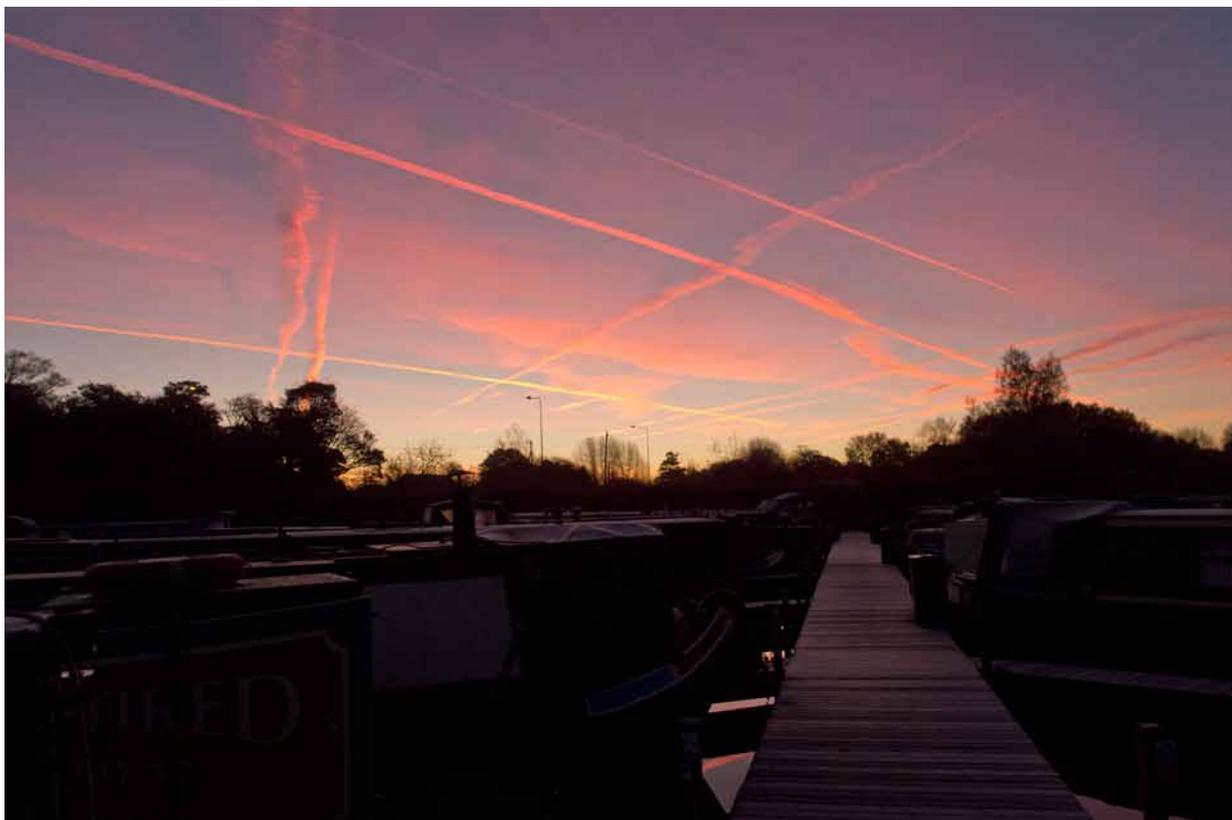
As already mentioned before, I start making my own bread again. A very tasty, multi-seed sourdough bread, with an almost perfect crumb. I also started to make yoghurt, but at the moment that's still in the experimental phase...

We celebrate my birthday, and I get a painting of WRT.

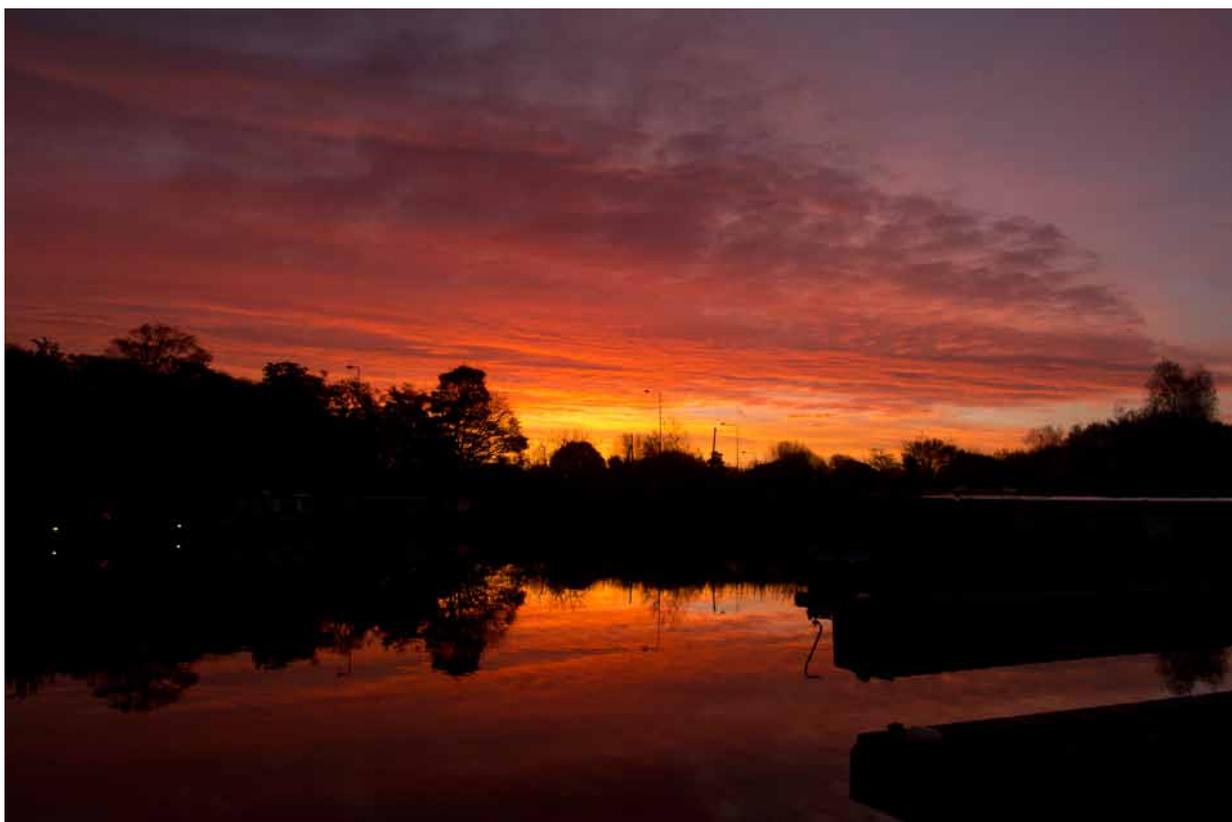


WRT in WRT

And we have numerous stunning sunsets and sunrises. I'm probably the only one that sees the sunrises... But twice I just have to interrupt breakfast preparations, grab my camera, and get out on a frozen jetty.



Sunrise 1



Sunrise 2

Finally, the latest 'event' so far was Lawrance's cataract. This time his left eye got hoovered out and got a new lens. He can see clearly now...



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