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Wide Beam to Ripon 2

In part two of our series, Alison Alderton, husbandRoger and Buster the dog, return from their exploration of the broad beam waters of the north east in their boat, *Lily*

Our return journey home was just as exciting as reaching Ripon. We were going to retrace our steps to Selby where we intended to turn off the tidal Ouse locking up onto the Selby Canal. To reach our base on the River Trent would then involve a zig zagging route via the River Aire, the Aire & Calder Navigation, the New Junction Canal and the Stainforth & Keadby Canal.

Before departing from Ripon we dismantled the wheelhouse and stopped at the sanitary station to top up with water and use BW self service pump out, *Lily* had to almost block the waterway in order to do so but luckily it was a quick procedure and a quiet morning. Gliding through the clear waters of this pretty canal we felt sad to be leaving but also excited at the thought of the different route home. With the low bridges out of the way and before locking down on the River Ure at Oxclose Lock we put the wheelhouse back up and finished just as the heavens opened, we had been extremely lucky and got away without a soaking.

Back to York

Travelling back down the Ure and the Ouse it seemed as if autumn had suddenly arrived as the leaves were now tinged with golden hues and the sun had a light watery quality about it. We decided to spend another day in York revisiting the places we enjoyed on the trip up and also baking! Roger is a dab hand at bread making so rustled up some Ciabatta rolls which we enjoyed with a spag bol that evening whilst I turned my hand to fruit scones, which were very nice but gone by tea time! We both have great fun cooking and baking on board, the gas oven is excellent for baking and we have discovered that a warm morning stove is the ideal place to let your bread rise before baking.

We moved on in the late afternoon to take up moorings at Naburn ready for our morning departure. To access the tidal Ouse we needed to book passage 24hrs in advance with the Naburn Lock keeper, who works a flexible day around the tide times. He then informed

TOP: **An early mist shrouded morning on the pretty Ripon Canal near Bell Furrows Lock.**
ABOVE: ***Lily's* wheelhouse has to be dismantled to gain access under the low bridges on the Ripon Canal.**

LEFT: ***Lily*** **moored above Naburn Lock preparing for the tidal journey back to Selby**

CENTRE: **Cawood Swing Bridge on the tidal River Ouse.**

BOTTOM: **The entrance to the Selby Canal**

the Selby Lock Keeper of our ETA and between the two of them and the Cawood Bridge Keeper they monitor your progress on this fast flowing tidal reach.

The name Ouse comes from the Anglo-Saxon meaning clear water however, most of this tidal section is a murky brown colour and often littered with rubbish. Apparently it can takes years for any floating debris on this river to reach the sea as it is constantly being swept back and forth on the tides. On our way upriver we had encountered no problems but on this journey things were different. Despite *Lily* being made of steel she is not indestructible so the trip back was constantly spent keeping a look out and dodging large floating tree trunks and branches.

We passed a narrow boat heading upriver before reaching Cawood Swing Bridge. We had room to pass beneath without the bridge opening but headroom was tighter than the journey up and the bridge keeper helpfully saw us beneath. We had some problems contacting the Selby Lock Keeper which we later discovered was due to several twisting spots on the river where radio contact is lost. We were helped out by the bridge keeper at Cawood who transferred messages back and forth for us.

Selby

Reaching Selby the river took on a more aggressive character as it narrows here forcing the flow through at greater speed. Lining up for the road bridge was tricky but once through we were on course for the next one. The Naburn Lock Keeper had explained the procedure of locking up at Selby and there is no denying that we were both anxious about it. Once directly out from beneath the railway swing bridge we had to turn *Lily* 180 degrees into the flow. The force of the river carried us along on our side for some distance before the power cut in driving our bow into the flow. We then powered back letting the tide carry us backwards until the bow was level with the lock before powering forward again to propel ourselves safely into the lock. Apparently the old working barges always used to enter the Selby Canal this way and we were quite chuffed that we had got in safely and without a bump or scrape. It seems that the amount of fresh water coming down with the outgoing tide had made the flow faster than usual, the trick is to reach Selby as close to high slack tide as possible making entry to the lock much easier.

The name 'Selby' means Seal Bay and the town was named after a colony of seals which once occupied the mud banks here. Much of the waterfront is bordered by mills and warehouses with new apartment blocks currently being constructed near the small basin where there are pleasant moorings. The town is some distance from the canal but is worth walking into as there is a good shopping centre and the stunning Abbey Church to explore.

Selby Canal

The Selby Canal was opened in 1778 and was a huge success recording the

LEFT: ***Lily*** **moored above the lock at West Haddlesey Junction.**

BELOW: **West Haddlesey Lock entrance from the River Aire.**

BOTTOM LEFT: **Beale Lock, River Aire on a grey windswept day.**

passing through of 800 coasters in the year 1800! We purchased a temporary canal license from the Lock Keeper as we wanted to take our time and detour into Doncaster and Goole before re-entering the Trent at Keadby. BW allow craft with a river licence and wishing to avoid Trent Falls, 72hrs free passage from Selby to Keadby and vice versa. We were also informed to give the Keadby lock keeper 24hrs notice of when we wished to lock down.

Leaving Selby Basin we had to open a swing bridge using the BW key to access the controls before continuing on passing the Selby Boat Centre. We thought that we might have to dismantle the wheelhouse again due to the low bridges on this canal but we managed to slip beneath without touching. *Buster* enjoyed being back on the canals as he could hop on and off as and when he fancied a walk along the towpath which is in good condition and forms part of The Selby Horseshoe Walk. The banks are very lush and the undergrowth quite dense in places with breaks here and there for the occasional bridge or small aqueduct. Weed has been a problem with this canal in the past however we experienced none and *Lily* pottered along nicely.

We moored for the night at West Haddlesey Junction. This is where the Selby Canal joins the River Aire and the moorings here are quiet. Locking onto the river the next day through the flood lock, there was hardly any change in water levels. The River Aire is bordered by high banks which form a much needed flood barrier yet over the tops the towering power stations of the area are still visible as their chimneys send billowing clouds of steam and smoke high into the air. The river was once navigable to the tidal Ouse and we had passed the rivers mouth on our outward journey. With the opening of the Selby Canal this route was slowly abandoned in favour of the canal.

A wide sweeping bend leads to Beal Lock and weir. This small village has a couple of pubs but no shop however we thought this a delightful spot and we were happy to waste some time here enjoying the peace and quiet. It is not far to Bank Dole Lock which is double gated and has a high rise, which lifted us above the River Aire. Standing next to a chemical works the air was filled with the smells of industry which continued as the route lead us past a medley of manmade industrial structures before reaching the junction with The Aire and Calder Navigation at Knottingley.

Working waterway

This waterway is not for the faint hearted. It is a commercial barge highway and what a joy it is to see a canal being used for the very purpose it was originally designed for. We passed several barges both empty and fully laden and as you

would expect there is plenty of depth and width to pass these monsters but we couldn't help thinking that perhaps a few more feet in width would be nice! The Kellingley Colliery works and wharves are again a reminder of what this waterway is all about. Unfortunately mining subsidence is still a problem for sections of this waterway and we noticed that much of it is lined with steel-piling, which is unsightly but a necessity.

Mobile lock keepers operate the length of this waterway but we did not expect to see them as commercial traffic has priority so we were prepared to work the Whitley and Pollington Lock ourselves, which was easy as they are mechanised. When there is just the two of us we use walkie talkies when carrying out lock or bridge operations so that we can safely keep in contact with each other. Much of the canal is made up from long straights bordered by open countryside and we were constantly buffeted by the wind but this was not a problem for *Lily*. We were soon able to see the turning for the New Junction Canal and directly opposite the huge Southfield Reservoir, which was built to help maintain water levels but before heading that way we made a detour into Goole as we were eager to explore its busy docks.

Goole

The overnight stay in Goole was well worth it as *Lily* spent the night tucked in amongst a motley collection of commercial barges, tankers, Humber Keels and fellow Dutch barges in amongst which are the BW moorings, which we shared with a solitary narrow boat. Close to here is the Waterways Museum, which is free of charge and full of interesting memorabilia. It is a fair walk into the town but worth it if just for the views across the docks. Before 1819 Goole was just a small hamlet but with the construction of the Aire & Calder Navigation built to link Knottingley with the Ouse, the area around the river and the new canal began to grow and flourish. Coal was the main cargo here transported by compartment boats known as 'Tom Puddings' and the only remaining hydraulically powered hoist used for loading, is currently under restoration. By 1828 the port was trading with Hamburg and today cargoes from across Europe and Scandinavia are dealt with here. If you are at all interested in commercial shipping then Goole is a pleasant time waster.

New Junction Canal

After topping up with diesel at Goole Boatyard we retraced our steps back to the entrance of the New Junction Canal. We thought that considering its dead straight five mile length this waterway was going to be a bit of a bore but far

from it. We moored just inside the entrance to get a closer look at the impressive Went Aqueduct. From the top of the footbridge there are fabulous views across the reservoir and the countryside beyond.

At the first swing bridge we were lucky enough to meet two Waddington's Barges. As they are working barges we gave them priority, happy to stand back and watch the professionals at work. You could not help but get that cold tingle of goose bumps on your arms as they passed by motor barge, towing dumb barge dwarfing *Lily* in size and stature.

TOP: **Sea-going cargo vessel being loaded at Goole Docks.**

CENTRE: **The Went Aqueduct at the entrance to the New Junction Canal.**

LEFT: **Syke House Lock & Swing Bridge, New Junction Canal.**

LEFT: **The Don Aqueduct looking imposing in the day's fading light.**

CENTRE: **Doncaster Visitor Moorings are situated in the heart of the town.**

BOTTOM LEFT: ***Lily* passing a cruiser penning down in West Stockwith Lock to access the tidal River Trent.**

OPPOSITE TOP: ***Lily* cruising beneath Newark Castle, River Trent.**

INSET: **Rain stops play for Buster on the tidal River Trent.**

The second bridge on this canal is a swing bridge followed by Skyehouse Lock where you can clearly see where the lock length has been extended as the old gates are still set within the walls. The site of two disused swing bridges follows then Kirkhouse Green Lift Bridge, Top Lane Lift Bridge and Low Lane Swing Bridge before the grand finale, the Don Aqueduct.

The huge guillotine gates, used as flood barriers enclose each end of this aqueduct and looked solemn in the fast fading light. One side has a barrier whilst the other has just a rail which made crossing feel precarious. Beyond the canal forms a junction with the Stainforth & Keadby Canal and the South Yorkshire Navigations and with time on our sides we decided to make a short detour into Doncaster, following an overnight stop at Barnby Dun.

Doncaster

Early next morning we set off through the lift bridge with the River Don running alongside for company through Long Sandall Lock and past the pretty Strawberry Island moorings with their fertile allotments. The moorings at Doncaster are popular and get busy so be prepared to double up if need be. We spent the day exploring the town and the fabulous market which sells absolutely everything. We purchased some seafood from the fresh fish market and that evening conjured up a magnificent monkfish and prawn Thai curry. It was a shame to turn *Lily* as the waterway almost begged us to carry on to Sheffield but that journey is one that will keep nicely for another time. Retracing our steps it was now very noticeable that leisure traffic had increased on this waterway compared to the others we had visited as we passed several narrow boats in one day, the most we had seen on the move for over two weeks!

After passing the entrance to the New Junction Canal we had Bramwith Lock to negotiate. This section of the canal runs parallel to the River Don and is bordered by fields and water meadows. From here to Keadby there are Swing Bridges galore

and it is at times hard work. We spent the night at Bramwith Swing Bridge where BW has secure moorings and the following day arose to a mist shrouded morning. Passing through pretty Stainforth the canal leads to a winding section thick with undergrowth before reaching the busy waterside town of Thorne. At the lock we met *Vulcan* a converted Humber Keel penning up so leant a hand with the operation which also involves swinging a bridge over one end of the lock. A short distance after the lock there are 24hr BW moorings where we stopped to give *Buster* a walk and shop for supplies.

Temperamental

Thorne Swinging Footbridge was a little temperamental to close but after two or three attempts it decided to give up and close properly for us! The bridges now come thick and fast as the canal heads out into open countryside. We were now high above the surrounding land and had far reaching views across the fields. Mauds Swing Bridge is the first hand operated bridge on this route and is followed by long straights which the railway runs parallel with and trains speed along oblivious to the laid back life of cruising. At Godnow Swing Bridge we needed to liaise with the railway signalman who has to close the railway gates when the swing bridge is open. Crowel Bridge is a fixed span bridge, a novelty for this canal, directly beyond which is the former Crowle Wharf now in a derelict state. There was now a much needed 3 miles without obstacles lying ahead. Neither of us were in any hurry to see another swing bridge and even *Buster* was now fed up with jumping on and off to help out and have a sniff about. We could soon make out the gas fed power station at Keadby and in the distance the Trent Hills.

The final swing bridge is directly followed by an unusual sliding railway bridge, one of only three in Europe. Mooring up at Keadby ahead of the lock we felt we had achieved something however I think Trent Falls has to be the favoured way there are only so many swing bridges you can cope with in one day. There is little to be said of Keadby the whole place looked as if it could do with being scrubbed clean and without any shipping at the wharves to keep us entertained I'm sorry to say that we found the place dull even on a bright day!

The following morning was bright and sunny. After talking to the Lock Keeper the final swing bridge was swung we were penning down and re-entering the Trent which felt like meeting an old friend for the first time in many years. Unfortunately the good weather did not hold and as we made our way up the Trent the clouds began to close in and it wasn't long before the first drops of rain began to fall. We arrived at Cromwell Lock just as the daylight was fading and locked up off the tidal section to spend the night on the pontoon moorings before heading back through Newark and onto Farndon the following day.

Lily had done us proud, we were out of the marina for almost three weeks enjoying waterways we had never explored before and will definitely be returning to in the future. With our confidence continually growing and having now experienced first hand just what *Lily* is capable of dealing with we hope this adventure will be the first of many!

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WAY TO GO! Fact file on this cruise

RESOURCES

Doncaster Tourist Information, The Blue Building, 38–40 High Street, Doncaster DN1 1DE. Tel: 01302 734873

Maps & Guides

Nicolson Guide No 6, Nottingham, York & the North East
The Boating Association – The Trent Chart Series No 3, The Yorkshire Ouse, Trent Falls to York
Cruising Guide to the North East Waterways by Ripon Motor Boat Club
Northeast Waterways by Derek Bowskill
Please note - Although published many years ago and despite the many changes that have since taken place along the route this book is interesting and full of useful information

Places of Interest

The Yorkshire Waterways Museum, Dutch River Side, Goole, East Yorkshire DN14 5TB. Tel: 01405 768730
Website: www.waterwaysmuseum.org.uk
Opening Times - Monday to Friday 9:00 to16:00. Sunday 11:00 to 16:00 (Easter to September). Admission Prices - Free