

## My Boat experience on the Shropshire /Llangollen canals

15th June - 22nd June 2014

### Day 1

On arrival at Whitchurch marina we received a very warm welcome by Jane who took us through our handover. Gordon then showed us onto the boat and took us through the safety handling procedures of our canal boat named Hagar.

On a glorious summer evening we set off on our adventure along the Shropshire Union Canal. After bridge 32 we came across a set of swing bridges (33 and 34), after passing under 7 more bridges we came across our 3rd swing bridge (number 42) after bridge 43 and after being aboard for two leisurely hours we decide to moor up for the night at Platt Lane. We were aware that the pub at Platt lane was closed so we had provided our own food for the first evening.





## Day 2

After a good night sleep and a hearty breakfast we set off at 9.10am. After a few more bridges we came to Press Junction, where there is an opportunity to branch off, which takes you to a turning point and a marina. At this point you are also near to Bettisfield Nature Reserve. We carried on along the canal and came to Bettisfield, just before bridge 48 where there are 2 water points and we decide to moor up and top up with water. After our stop for water we passed by Bettisfield Boats, which is a slow section with boats moored on both sides. After a further 8 bridges we arrived at the Ellesmere tunnel, on checking that no other boats were coming towards us, we travelled 87 yards through the Ellesmere tunnel. Then just before Blackwater Meadow marina we moored up and walked into Ellesmere, which took us 10 minutes where we had lunch and went to Tesco for supplies.



Continuing on our journey from Ellesmere, we arrived at Frankton Junction where there is access to the Montgomery Canal via Frankton lock, but this is restricted to the hours of 12-2 and must be booked in advanced by telephoning 0303 040 4040. Continuing from Frankton Junction the bridge number now start from 1 again and after bridge 5 which is a sharp bend there is a pub on the left hand side called The Narrow Boat Inn. Adjacent to the pub there is a boat yard called Maestermyn Mid-Wales Welsh Lady, and just after there is a 70ft turning point. Then passing under bridge 11 you'll come to the Jack Mytton pub, after a few minutes we prepared ourselves for the first of our 2 locks Called New Marton Locks, having successfully manoeuvred through the locks we continue through open countryside and to our amazement we came across a cow wading in the canal. Further on we saw a film crew and an even bigger surprise awaited us in the form of TV celebrity John Sargent who was filming a documentary about canals. We later found out that this programme is to be screened on ITV in January 2015. We then approached the Lion Quay Hotel which provides mooring for boating patrons. After our 8 hour day we passed the Poacher's Pocket and decide to moor up for the evening and eat at the Poacher's Pocket, where we had an enjoyable evening meal. They serve food up to 10pm.



### Day 3

After a leisurely breakfast we set off on our travels again at 10.00am. On reaching the Chirk aqueduct which opened in 1801 and carries the canal for 220m running along -side the Chirk viaduct carrying the Chester to Shrewsbury railway line. At the end of the aqueduct there is ideal mooring point from which we could check our access for the Chirk tunnel. A 459 yards tunnel with a towpath running alongside. Then we proceeded along the canal passing the Chirk marina on the left hand side. Travelling further on you will travel through the Whitehurst/Whitehouses tunnel. This tunnel is 191 yards long and like the Chirk tunnel is not wide enough for two boats to go through, so take care when entering. Further on we approached a lift bridge which is bridge 28; following this there is a 70 feet turning point then bearing right we moored at the water point and filled up with water. On reaching the start of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct we waited our turn to cross the aqueduct in a convoy of 3 boats. Having crossed the aqueduct we arrived at Trevor, bearing sharp left and under bridge 31 we continued towards Llangollen. After passing under 10 more bridges, we arrived at the start of 3 sections called the narrows this stretch of the canal is a one way system, where only one boat can go along the canal at one time. On these sections it is advisable to send one member of the crew to check to see if any other boats are coming in the other direction.





On arriving at the moorings in Llangollen we reversed into our moorings which were going to be our base for the next two nights. There are mooring for 32 boats and maximum stay is 48 hours. You need to purchase a ticket and this is purchased at the Horse Drawn Boat Centre. Mooring for 24 hours is £6.00 and for 48 hours it is £12. At the Horse Drawn Centre, here they offer a 45 minute horse drawn barge ride. After enjoying a late afternoon drink we changed and enjoyed an evening meal at the Corn Mill.

#### Day 4

After breakfast we decided to visit Llangollen and its surrounding area. We walked from the marina for about 1hr passing The Chainbridge Hotel until we came to Horseshoe Falls. From the falls we returned to the hotel for morning coffee on the terrace. From the terrace we looked over the River Dee towards the station and watched the steam train pass by. On returning back into Llangollen we passed by the marquees where the musical Eisteddfod would be taking place in July.

Llangollen has a wonderful mix of coffee bar, restaurants, pubs, hotel, gift shops, local shops and you could even take a trip on the steam train.

We called at Nisa and Spa shops to buy items for our BBQ. There is a stand to place a disposable bbq on and a picnic bench at the Llangollen moorings.



## Day 5

This was the start of our return journey back along the canal to Whitchurch marina, which we could now take a more leisurely pace. Having said that we decided to make an early start 7.00 am so as to beat the crowd through the narrows.





We arrived back at Trevor, crossed over the Pontysyllte Aqueduct, filled up with water and passed through the lift bridge (number 28) and moored up after the private moorings on the left hand side for breakfast. After breakfast we had a walk back over the aqueduct into Trevor to have a look around. On returning to our boat we proceeded at a leisurely pace towards Chirk, passing through the Whitehurst tunnel and mooring just before the Chirk tunnel, where there are a few mooring places, and were lucky enough to secure a place for the night.



We spent the remainder of the afternoon in Chirk this was a 15 minute walk from our moorings. There are a few shops to replenish your stocks and a couple of pubs, if you were looking for a place to eat. If you did have time you could go and visit Chirk Castle.

## Day 6

Again we decided to make an early start, we passed through Chirk tunnel and over the aqueduct, we then stopped for breakfast. After our break we resumed our journey to Ellesmere passing by the Poachers Pocket, Lion Quays Hotel, through the two New Marton locks, Maestermyn marina and Frankton Junction. On the approach into Ellesmere, we topped up with water which is on the right hand side and then carried on into the basin to moor up for the evening. It is best to go down to the end and turn around and then moor up as later arriving boats moor all the way down thus restricting the turning point. [Which was to our disadvantage the next morning] We spent the remainder of the afternoon in Ellesmere before returning to the boat in the evening with some local fish and chips.



## Day 7/8

As we are usually early risers we again left early morning and turned the boat around in the basin [ see above] and proceeded at a leisurely pace to our last stop which was going to be Grindley Brook. After passing by the Whitchurch marina and through our last lift bridge (number 31) we arrived at Grindley Brook mid -afternoon, and just before the stair case locks we turned the boat around in the 70ft turning point and then moored up for what was our last night on board .



Our last evening was spent in the Horse & Jockey where we enjoyed a splendid meal and good conversation with fellow boaters.



The following morning we returned the barge to the marina.

After spending a wonderful seven days travelling through open and quiet English & Welsh countryside and the experience of travelling over two majestic aqueducts and through three wonderfully constructed tunnels and not forgetting the popular town of Llangollen we can truly recommend this canal journey .