

BONJOURNAL



THE BIG THAMES ADVENTURE

By PADDINGTON

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26 Jul 2014

12:00 pm

Introduction by Paddington

Hi there !

I wasn't able to make this trip as I was visiting darkest Peru at the time.

Besides, two weeks is a long time for a bear on a boat !

However my great friends and travelling companions, Graham and Fee, had a fun week on their boat Oyster Bay.

I hope you enjoy reading about their adventure !

Paddington Bear



27 Jul 2014

12:00 pm

Walton Marina

Fee's Mum and Tony decide not to come for lunch so we spend the morning doing final preparations.

All fuelled up, batteries charged, fresh water tank full - what could go wrong ?

12:30 pm

Walton Marina to Runnymede

We set off at 12:30 in the glorious sunshine, heading upstream under Walton Bridge, along the Desborough straight and through Shepperton Lock.

The river is quiet so it is not long before we have meandered through Chertsey Meads, passing one of our favourite picnic spots, negotiated Chertsey Lock and are approaching Penton Hook Lock.

2:00 pm

Walton Marina to Runnymede

As we are manoeuvring slowly in reverse, Graham tries to put her through neutral into forward gear.

Instead of that, the engine goes even harder into reverse and we are heading towards the bank at high speed. Graham kills the engine, moves the gear lever into neutral and then tries to restart it. No luck !

After several failed attempts, our only hope is that the boat will slow sufficiently before we crash into someone's well-manicured mooring.

After a couple of minutes we are gliding backwards down the Thames, gently, but out of control. We are just about to drop anchor when we spot some passers-by in a dinghy. Fortunately they are able to tow us over to the lay-by at Penton Hook Lock.

2:30 pm

Walton Marina to Runnymede

That's when Graham remembers a company who do the equivalent of AA for boaters, or should it be RAC for boaters !

We call them up, pay for an emergency call out and now we are fully paid up Silver Members for a year. Must remember to look at the bank account to see how much that cost !

Now we have to wait . . .

5:00 pm

Walton Marina to Runnymede

It seems like forever but eventually Tom turns up to rescue us. Twenty minutes later he has replaced the guilty split-pin; the cause of the problem that meant we were stuck in reverse. The mechanics are such that you can only ever start the engine whilst in neutral.

We have nothing but good things to say about Tom and the folks at RCR (River Canal Rescue) - polite, responsive and certainly know their stuff.

6:00 pm

Walton Marina to Runnymede

By 6pm we are going through Penton Hook Lock and back under way.

Passing through the lovely Staines, or should I say Staines-on-Thames, we reach Bell Weir Lock after the lock-keeper has gone home for the night.

7:30 pm

Walton Marina to Runnymede

After one or two challenges and the assistance of a 12 year-old we are through the lock and on our final stretch to Runnymede.

We find a lovely spot and moor up ready for some vegetable rice and a

cold beer.

And this is just Day One !



28 Jul 2014

8:00 am

Runnymede to Windsor Racecourse Marina

We awake to thunderstorms. Real thunderstorms, lightening, raindrops the size of golf-balls. We hear on the news that there was a whole month's worth of July rain in half an hour.

Now we find out where the canopy leaks are. Not too many, but we take in enough water to fill a couple of saucepans.

We have a hot shower and toast for breakfast so at least we know that the gas is working.

9:00 am

Runnymede

I must say, you do see some funny sights on the river.

This power driven floating shed was later seen on a TV programme about Britains Best Sheds !



9:30 am

Runnymede to Windsor Racecourse Marina

By the time we leave Runnymede, the sun is beginning to make an appearance. We cruise up through Old Windsor and Romney Locks to Windsor town where we stop for an hour to do some shopping.



2:30 pm

Runnymede to Windsor Racecourse Marina

It's a short journey from Windsor through Boveney Lock and then a sharp left to reach Windsor Racecourse Marina. The approach to the marina is something quite different, very narrow with trees

overhanging. It is like the jungle ride at Disney World. You could almost be going down the upper reaches of the Amazon, minus the piranhas.

3:30 pm

Runnymede to Windsor Racecourse Marina

The Racecourse Marina itself is lovely and looks out over the far end of the racetrack. The restaurant is very inviting so we go in for some pre-racing food by way of a late lunch.

Then it's back to the boat, shower, change and off to the races.



8:30 pm

Runnymede to Windsor Racecourse Marina

Fee does well in the early races but it takes until the final race to score with the big win. That is more than enough to pay for the day's entertainment so we head back to the marina restaurant for a final celebratory drink before retiring for the night.

29 Jul 2014

9:00 am

*Windsor Racecourse Marina to
Oakley Court*

After last night's success at the races we decide to treat ourselves to a Harvester breakfast. The marina restaurant does not do breakfast except on Friday, Saturday and Sunday so we walk up the driveway to the Windsor Lad for a full English.

12:00 pm

*Windsor Racecourse Marina to
Oakley Court*

Having topped up with water and recharged all batteries and gadgets, we leave the marina at 11:45 and go back up through the creek to the main Thames. A bit scary when we meet a boat coming the other way but there is just about enough room to squeeze past each other.

We arrive at Oakley Court soon after midday. We moor on the frontage and walk up to the hotel reception to let them know we are here.

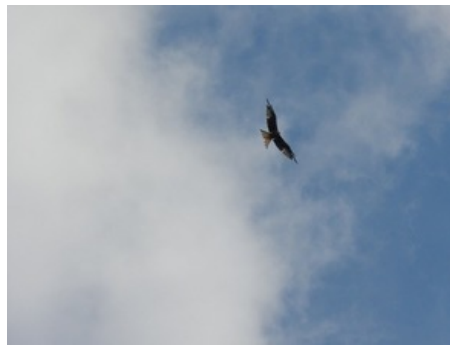


1:00 pm

Oakley Court

Then we go back to the boat for some reading and sunbathing. A boat goes past and a lady's hat flies off into the water. They think about going back for it but then notice another boat coming along. A few

hand signals and the other boat diverts to retrieve the hat. Over head there is some kind of bird of prey making a noise like a mouse - maybe that is to attract the mice.



1:30 pm

Oakley Court

Then comes lunch. It is a very hot sunny day so we grab a table outside and order some fish goujons. Graham goes for a cold beer, Fee analyses the drinks menu and opts for a Black Martini.

The waitress takes our order and Fee announces that she's "never had a black one before !"

Quote of the day !!!!



2:30 pm

Oakley Court

Martini turns into sparkling rose !



4:30 pm

Oakley Court

Goujons turn into scones and afternoon tea and the sun is still shining.

The schoolteachers at the table next to us rabbit on about their recruitment campaign. Must be a private school if they are dining at Oakley Court !



7:00 pm
Oakley Court

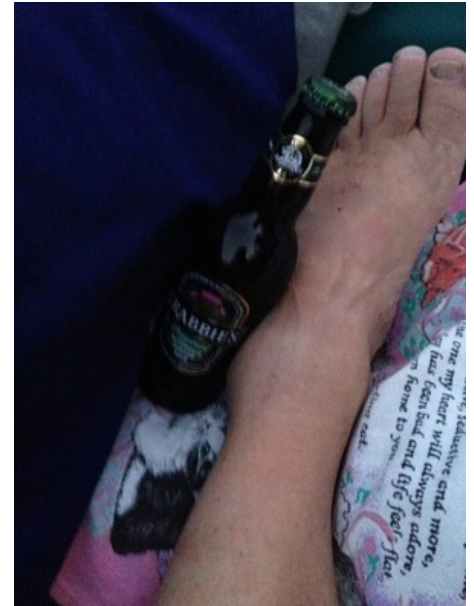
Then Fee decides it's time to head for port, or rather Port and Cheese ! Graham's Port - of course.

A bit of an incident when we order our last port and ask for the bill. Fee spills the contents of her glass over the money on the table and over Graham's shorts. The barman washes the notes and hangs them up to dry - this is genuine money laundering !



6:00 pm
Snickers

Fee phones the vet for news of Snickers who has been in for tests. There is definitely something there so they have sent a sample away to be checked. As she has been having difficulty grooming herself and the weather is hot, Snickers has been shaved and now looks like a poodle.



10:00 pm
Oakley Court

Not the ideal end to the day considering we have a four hour journey taking in five locks tomorrow !



30 Jul 2014

9:00 am
Oakley Court to Harleyford Marina

Ouch ! The ankle is still swollen and sore.

9:00 pm
Oakley Court

On the way back to the boat Fee suggests that Graham poses on a tree stump for a picture. Unfortunately it is dark and the ground is very uneven from the roots of the tree. Graham goes over

Healthy porridge for breakfast this morning then we make a quiet exit from Oakley Court, if you can make a quiet exit with a 30hp engine on the back of your boat !

The next stretch of the Thames past Bray has some wonderful houses so we take lots of pictures along the

way.



2:00 pm
Oakley Court to Harleyford Marina

For a pleasant change, it is an uneventful day. Five locks and the predicted 4 hours cruising before we reach Harleyford Marina. We are offered a lovely mooring on the bank of the Thames - still supplied with fresh water and electricity. Time to put Graham's leg up to reduce the swelling.

Oh, Graham did manage to lose the boat keys somewhere in the marina. Fortunately someone spots them lying in the grass and hands them into the marina office where Fee collects them and offers apologies on behalf of her husband.

7:00 pm
Harleyford Marina

A taxi ride takes us to Marlow for a tasty meal in Baroosh followed by an early night back on board.



31 Jul 2014

11:00 am
Harleyford Marina to Henley

No rush today. We only have a couple of hours up to Henley but we can't leave it too late or we won't get a mooring warns the marina man.



1:00 pm
Henley

We reach Henley at lunchtime and find a mooring close to the centre alongside a park. Mooring is free between 10am and 3pm. After that it is £9 for the night. We have lunch aboard before exploring the shops and then buying our ticket for the night in the car park.

Mooring is Pay and Display !

5:30 pm
Henley

The afternoon is spent chilling and reading.

Followed by pre-dinner drinks by the riverside.





After that it's time for a walk along the towpath to the next lock and back including a visit to the River and Rowing Museum.

Weather is a mixture of sunshine and threatening showers so the canopy is up and down for much of the day. No cruising today, we keep the same spot alongside the park and do a lot of reading and people watching.

2:00 pm
Henley

In the afternoon people in the park are erecting some kind of structure. It turns out to be an Open Air Cinema ! Seems they travel around putting on film shows at various places such as Ascot, as well as in Henley. Maybe one to watch out for another time.

2:30 pm
Henley

Time to buy another £9 ticket to take us through the night and then we head off to check into the hotel.

The Hotel du Vin, what a lovely hotel and what a great room we have !



5:30 pm
Henley

We make the most of the hotel room and await the arrival of our good friends Ernest and Jane for birthday celebrations.

Having battled with the M25, Ernest and Jane are ready for pre-dinner drinks.



7:00 pm
Henley

The evening is delightful. The first opportunity to tell others of our adventures, catch up on news from Weybridge and enjoy fabulous food and wine.

8:30 pm
Henley

Dinner is at La Bodega, a fabulous tapas restaurant.

After dinner we venture into a tiny pub where they have live music on a Thursday.

When they say "live" it is actually "Blues" which may be "live" but definitely not "lively".



01 Aug 2014

9:00 am
Henley

Fee cooks bacon rolls for breakfast and they are delicious.



10:00 pm
Henley

After a final drink (one for the stairs) we retire to our enormous bed for a good night's sleep !



2:00 pm
Henley to Bourne End

By the time we get to Temple Lock it is bucketing down but Fee does the honours with the ropes up front.



02 Aug 2014

9:30 am
Henley to Bourne End

Breakfast with Ernest and Jane. Full English for Ernest and Graham, baked eggs for Jane and Fee.

After breakfast everyone checks out, jump in the car and go down to the boat.

A quick visit to Boots for an ankle support in the pouring rain and then Ernest and Jane head off.

12:00 pm
Henley to Bourne End

The rain eases off around midday so we sail down to the pontoon for some fuel and a top-up of fresh water.

Then we head off downstream to begin our journey back towards Walton passing through a Regatta just starting at Henley.



3:30 pm
Bourne End

We arrive at The Bounty, a quirky place in Bourne End. Done out in confederate flags with a pinball machine, bar billiards table and a dart board. If it wasn't by the river you might expect the local Hell's Angels to turn up !



9:00 pm
Bourne End

We turn off the fridge to save electricity and spend the night moored up outside The Bounty.

03 Aug 2014

9:00 am
Bourne End to Cliveden

We awake to a tapping noise against the hull. At first this is thought to be pieces of wood, but on further investigation is found to be ducks nibbling at the waterline. They must be Pecking Ducks !

After a tasty fried egg roll on board we cross over the Thames to Bourne End Marina where we charge up, fill up with water etc. Fee walks up the road for coffee, muffins and Sunday papers.

10:30 am
Bourne End to Cliveden

We are all set and ready to head off for Cookham Lock which we reach in just 20 minutes. By 11 we have reached the islands at Cliveden. By a stroke of luck, the very spot we having been hoping for is free so we grab it and moor up.



11:30 am
Cliveden

Within 20 minutes the kayak is inflated by Fee (Graham still has a sore swollen ankle - honest !)
See 29 JUL 2014 for details of ankle injury



1:00 pm
Cliveden

Graham goes off round the islands in the kayak



1:30 pm
Cliveden

Fee settles down to read the papers



3:00 pm
Cliveden

Enough exercise for one day



6:00 pm
Cliveden

Graham goes fishing for dinner. Might need something a bit bigger than this !



9:00 pm
Cliveden

We learn something new today from some passing foragers : in the UK there are a number of species of freshwater mussels, one of which is a Pearl Mussel.

Amongst other places in the UK, some of these mussels grow around the islands in the Thames at Cliveden.

Not a lot of people know that !

04 Aug 2014

9:00 am
Cliveden

The big day has arrived, Fee's Birthday.

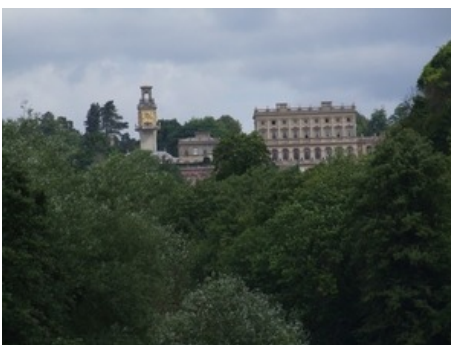
We awake in the peaceful surroundings of the Cliveden Islands. Poached eggs with beans on toast is observed by a rather large spider who as his eyes on the eggs. Fee has her eyes on the spider !

This sets us up for a tandem half hour boot camp stint in the kayak. Fee at the front Graham at the back. Twice around the islands and back to Oyster Bay.



12:00 pm
Cliveden

Afterwards we prepare for Cliveden. Bags packed, we take the boat over to the private mooring area and call Cliveden for the car to come and collect us.



1:30 pm
Cliveden

Our room is not ready yet so we are escorted to the Club Room in the converted stables area for lunch.

Fee has vegetable risotto accompanied by a glass of Sancerre Rose. Graham has a salmon, mackerel and prawn platter.



3:00 pm
Cliveden

After lunch we are escorted to our room which is lovely and overlooks the walled garden and swimming pool which was at the centre of the Profumo Scandal !



4:00 pm
Cliveden

After unpacking, which takes all of two minutes it is time for a swim in the outdoor pool and a bit of relaxation.

7:30 pm
Cliveden

Dinner is booked for 7:30 so we go to the Club Bar for pre-dinner drinks. Being located in the old stables, the barstools have saddles mounted on them !



before retiring to our lavish room for the night.

Happy Birthday Fee !



10:30 am

Cliveden to Windsor Racecourse Marina

After breakfast we pack up and prepare for the next stage of our voyage. We walk through to reception with our bags which seemed to cause some amusement - apparently you don't carry your own bags at Cliveden - you call for someone to do that for you. We carry our bags.

The lady at reception checkout says "Do take a seat".

Graham thinks "If I have to sit down for the bill then it's going to be painful !"

05 Aug 2014

8:30 am

Cliveden to Windsor Racecourse Marina

We awake to the sound of the birds singing in the manicured gardens of the Cliveden Estate. Breakfast arrives in our room at 8:45. We did ask for it between 8:30 and 9:00 so 8:45 is indeed very precise !

This is what you get when you order breakfast late at night after much champagne !

Once the bill is settled, and the house re-mortgaged, our bags are carried to the awaiting car for transportation back down to Oyster Bay at the bottom of the garden. It takes a good five minutes to drive to the bottom of the garden and Spring Cottage where the real Profumo activity took place !



8:00 pm

Cliveden

After our pre-dinner drink we are escorted through to the restaurant where, because it is a special occasion, a table by the window overlooking the Parterre awaits.

Fee has a leek gratin starter followed by rump of lamb. Graham has scallops also followed by the lamb. Desert is a chocolate pave and a cheese platter.

We then adjourn to the Club Bar for a nightcap and a chat with Andre, the very attentive bar manager,



12:30 pm

Cliveden to Windsor Racecourse Marina

It is only a matter of minutes before we are heading off back down through Boulter's Lock, through Maidenhead and Bray. Just before Bray Lock, we once again pass by the home of the now notorious Australian entertainer/painter



12:30 pm
Runnymede

It takes almost exactly the predicted two hours to get down through the three sets of locks to Runnymede - our destination for the day.

As we are mooring at our favourite spot, the lady on another boat shouts across "we are coming in in front of you, can you move your boat back".

I don't think so !!!! She seems to think she owns the river - she doesn't !



2:00 pm
Runnymede

After a nice roll for lunch we pump up the kayak and go for a paddle along the river.



3:00 pm
Runnymede

We walk along to the cafe for a scone and then we go up to the Magna Carta Memorial



4:30 pm
Runnymede

Back to the boat for some reading, watching the passing traffic on the river.



5:00 pm
Runnymede

... and a bit more fishing

6:00 pm
Cliveden to Windsor Racecourse Marina

We pass by the Amazonian entrance to Windsor Racecourse Marina thinking we might go through Boveney Lock and visit Windsor before returning to the marina for the night.

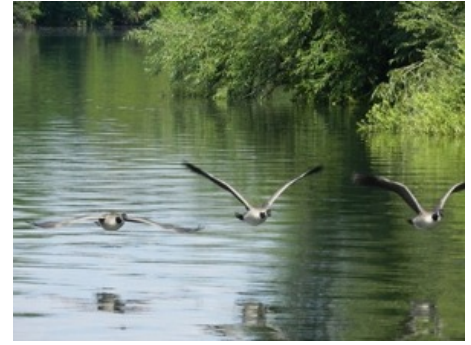
However, after a prolonged wait at Boveney Lock, the engine gets a bit temperamental. Not wanting to run the risk of getting stranded, we retire to Windsor Racecourse Marina and are offered the same convenient berth as we had enjoyed the previous week.

A quiet evening on board and an opportunity to charge up batteries etc.

06 Aug 2014

9:30 am
Windsor Racecourse Marina to Runnymede

After a good night's sleep on board, Graham goes out to turn on the gas. Over the starboard bow he spots a large Carp, between a foot and a foot and a half long. No wonder they don't permit fishing in the marina !



12:00 pm
Walton Marina

By midday we are entering Walton Marina.

Who's been sleeping in our bed ? There is another boat in our normal berth. No problem though, there is another empty one nearby so we moor up there.

And that, my friends, is the end of our Adventure on the Thames.

" Believe me, my young friend, there is NOTHING -- absolutely nothing -- half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats. Simply messing. "
(Kenneth Grahame)



10:30 am
Runnymede to Walton Marina

Scrambled egg on toast for breakfast, a top up of fuel from the jerry can and we are ready to go.

Four locks to negotiate today, Bell Weir, Penton Hook, Chertsey and Shepperton before arriving at our final destination.

Resisted the temptation to stop off for an Ice-Cream. Yes, they even have ice-cream vans on the river !

07 Aug 2014

9:00 am
Runnymede to Walton Marina

Last day of the trip and we awake to another sunny day and birdsong.



11:00 am
Runnymede to Walton Marina

Apart from a slight altercation with a rowing boat who decided to go across our bow, it is a nice relaxed, uneventful journey.