

# Boat Trip Disaster 2016

**2016-8-20**

This is our long awaited "Boating Week". It's been a tough few weeks at work but now we have a week off work with a Bank Holiday at the end !

10 days – maybe we can make it up through Reading this time ?

Maybe not.

*Saturday 20th August*

*On the first Saturday it is Sam's 50th BBQ down at The Tower. As there are so many people going, Sam has decided that nobody gets a room which is fair enough. The options are stay in a B&B or bring a tent. We decide to bring a tent. Not being one for camping in general, Fee insists that we have a tent large enough to stand up in.*

*Gales are forecast and the wind is already blowing strong when we arrive at The Tower with our brand new tent. We decide that the first thing we must do is erect the tent before partaking in food and alcohol. The BBQ is already under way and we have many onlookers as we struggle to unravel our tent in the wind.*

*Fortunately some guests come to our rescue including a scout leader who is very knowledgeable when it comes to tent erections. Five people and 30 minutes later we have a fully functional tent which is advertised to be erected by one person in 10 minutes. Time for a beer me thinks !*

*The BBQ is great fun and we survive the night, as does the tent.*



Sunday 21st August

We don't get much sleep, expecting the tent to take off at any moment, so we postpone the start of our boat trip to Monday.

Monday 22nd August

The weather is fine, we have stocked up with food, we have our itinerary for the week and off we go. Being a Monday, the river is fairly clear and we make good progress, approaching Romney Lock at about 2:30pm. That's when the fun starts. As we enter the lock, Graham secures a rear line and then tries to nudge the boat forward to get Fiona nearer to a bollard to secure a fore line.

The boat goes backwards.

Graham pushes the throttle further forward.

The boat goes faster backwards.

Déjà vu – we are stuck in Reverse!

Graham kills the engine.

As the lock fills up, Graham advises the Lock-keeper that we may have a problem.

Sure enough, when we try to leave the lock, we are indeed stuck in reverse. With the help of the Lock-keeper, we pull Drift A Wey out of the lock and into the layby.

There is a boat yard by Romney Lock but unfortunately the person who could have helped is elsewhere that afternoon. We phone River and Canal Rescue who promise to have someone come by later in the afternoon. We pay the £75 callout fee and sign up for a year's Silver Membership.

Fiona walks into Windsor to do some shopping while Graham awaits the arrival of the rescue man.

By 5pm the rescue man has arrived. The fault is diagnosed as a broken cable between the throttle at the helm and the gear change down in the engine compartment. Whilst the rescue man examines the cable connection, Graham holds up the heavy helm fixture, not realising at the time that he is spraining his wrist quite severely.

Rescue man announces that he does not have a cable long enough to fix the problem. Our only option is to use a boat hook, tied to the gear change with string, and manually move the gear change between Reverse, Neutral and Forward as and when required. With the engine compartment open and Fiona working the makeshift gear change, we head up through Windsor, trying to get to the Racecourse marina for the night. How embarrassing, slowly moving through the centre of Windsor on a balmy evening with a diesel engine sending out 100 decibels into the tranquil historic town.



As we arrive at Boveney Lock, Graham advises the Lock-keeper that we have a problem. "Yes, we know – we heard you coming!".

Having hobbled through Boveney Lock we start through the narrow, tree-lined approach to Windsor Racecourse Marina praying that we do not meet a boat coming the other way. It's tricky enough navigating through the narrow channel at the best of times, but with no gears, we have added anticipation. Fortunately we have a clear run and soon we have the challenge of mooring the boat with our makeshift gear change. Graham steers, makes good use of the bow-thruster and calls instructions to Fiona.

"Forward"

"Neutral"

"Reverse"

"Neutral"

"Reverse"

"Neutral"

"Forward"

"Neutral"

"Reverse"

"Neutral"

... and there we are, safely moored up, much to the amusement of 15 people enjoying their evening meal on the restaurant terrace.

We have a table booked at GoGo's Restaurant at the marina and are not disappointed with the food and beverages.



Tuesday 23rd August

We awake to a sunny day and decide to phone the Romney Lock boatyard man to see if he can help us out. We also advise the marina that we might be staying for a few days until we can get the boat fixed – not a problem.

Boat fix man comes and measures up the length of cable required, removes the old broken cable and promises to come back later in the day or the next morning.

At least the weather is warm as we wait out the repairs at the marina. By this time, Graham's wrist is beginning to hurt quite badly. Fiona raids the first aid kit and straps up Graham's wrist with a bandage.

True to his word, boat fix man returns at 3pm with a new 18 metre cable which he fits and tests. Graham pays in cash and we are once again seaworthy.

Wednesday 24th August

Having lost a day's sailing, and with Graham's painful wrist potentially jeopardising lock manoeuvres, we decide that we may as well head back downstream.

We reach Runnymede mid afternoon and our favourite spot is available for mooring.

Graham goes for a swim.



By evening, the clouds are rolling in and a storm is predicted. We have booked a table, for the first time, at the little Italian Restaurant next to the Runnymede Hotel and walk along the riverbank armed with an umbrella. The restaurant does not look much from the outside, but the service is friendly, the food is delicious and reasonably priced. Whilst we are dining, the heavens open, there is thunder and lightning and torrential rain. Fortunately, by the time we have finished our meal, the storm has blown over and we have a dry walk back to the boat.

#### Thursday 25th August

We are taking a leisurely cruise back down towards Walton Marina when we get a text from Don and Liss, inviting us to join them for lunch at the Queen's Head in Weybridge. We make it back in time for a late lunch in the courtyard garden which is most enjoyable.

#### Friday 26th August

Graham pays a visit to the walk-in centre, maybe for an X-Ray, but there is a three hour wait so he opts for self-diagnosis and a heavy duty wrist support from Boots instead

#### The Weekend

Having cut short our boating trip, we now have the weekend to enjoy at home. Saturday we go to Kevin's birthday BBQ at his house, Sunday we meet up for birthday drinks in Sullivan's, Bank Holiday Monday we recover.



























