

Drift A Wey 2016 June to December

2016-6-5

(Graham, Fee, Don, Liss)

First weekend in June and the weather looks like it might trump last weekend on Sunday. We arrange to take our friends Don and Liss out for their first time aboard Drift A Wey.

Sure enough on Sunday morning the sun is shining and Graham goes down to prepare the boat. Canopy down, batteries on, fridge on, food in fridge, engine warmed up, water tank filled. Everything is set so Graham returns home to collect the First Mate and Crew for the day.

Back down to the marina and we are lucky enough to still find a parking space – this will be a popular day on the river.

After the safety demonstration Don and Liss are, of course, offered life jackets. They decline – Don has brought a rubber ring for Liss!

They do, however, accept the offer of official Drift A Wey T-Shirts and Caps for Deck Dudes and Kool Krew.

We raise our glasses of fizz and look forward to a fun day afloat.



We leave the marina and head upstream towards Shepperton Lock. The plan is to go up the Desborough Channel, straight to the lock but we are met with a swarm of sculls and decide that it might be better to go around the island on this occasion. Even there we have to keep dodging canoeists and dinghy sailors – it is indeed a popular day on the river, but we are in no rush.



There is a short wait before Shepperton Lock but we are soon through, Don and Liss have experienced their first lock and we are heading towards Chertsey Meads.



Our favourite spot at Chertsey Meads is available on the Surrey bank. Although we had often taken Oyster Bay there, this is the first time for Drift A Wey. We soon find out that the shaft drive goes deeper than our previous boats and, after re-arranging some of the stones on the riverbed with our propeller, we seek out an alternative, deeper, spot.



Just a little bit further down on the Middlesex bank we moor up amongst the meadow flowers and thoughts turn to food. First Mate Fee serves up a terrific selection of cold meats, cheese, dip, olives etc. and Don opens a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc which has been chilling nicely in the ice bucket. Just one thing missing. . . the homemade guacamole and carrot crudites which are back home in the fridge . . . we always manage to forget something.



We happen to be right in the middle of a kingfisher's flightpath as he flies from bank to bank looking for a tasty fish. The meadow flowers are full of bumble bees, butterflies and dragon flies all making the most of the hot sunny weather. We are visited by a mother and her chicks who seem to like crumbled oatcakes.



And this is a real manshed !



After lunch we retrieve the stakes from the bank and set off downstream. It's time for a change of helm.



There is quite a queue when we reach Shepperton Lock but we moor up in the layby and await our turn. There are five boats in front of us, two quite big, so it is touch and go as to whether we will make the first group. It does give us time to stretch our legs and pose for a few more pictures.



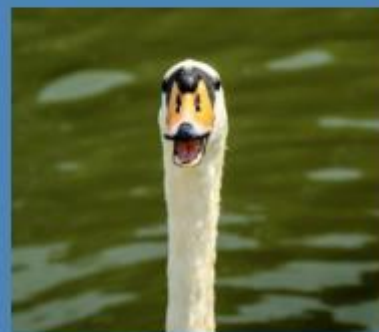
As it happens we just manage to sneak in last. We are right at the back of the lock and need to make sure our stern does not get caught on the ledge. If that happens, the bow will go down with the water and Don will need his rubber ring after all.

First Mate Fee lassos the bollard on the first attempt. The lady on the boat in front (All That Jazz) is most impressed, but Fee has to admit that she has had a bit of a bad run recently.

One of the boats up front has trouble leaving the lock and has to be pulled through (we remember such days with Ice Penguin) but we are soon on our way again.



All the sculls and skiffs have disappeared from the river, maybe they are in the The Anglers or The Swan. It's looking clear so we go down the Desborough Channel, a little way past the entrance to Walton Marina and then turn around to approach upstream.



We gently ease back into our berth and then it's time to pack up. Don helps hook up the shore power and Graham bangs his head on the cockpit roof – again ! That's the second time in as many weeks.

Soon we are back in Grove Place and thoughts turn towards a refresher in the JF. It's four thirty which we consider to be a decent time even though the sun will not be over the yard arm for another four or five hours !

Don obliges with the drinks and we proceed to regale all and sundry with our tales of a day on the high seas, whether they want to hear about it or not.

We are joined by Ernest, Jane, Jane's brother (Stephen) and a couple of their friends who have been enjoying the delights of lunch at the Hand and Spear.

A couple of drinks later and we are joined by Bi Bi. You must know Bi Bi she is famous all over Weybridge, in fact she IS Weybridge . . . no acutally, we don't know you Bi Bi. But we soon do, along with her ample BBs which she insists on introducing to us all . . . several times.

Bi Bi appears to be impressed with everything.
We have been out on a boat "Really ? Shut uuuuup !"
Ernest and Jane have a BMW "Really ? Shut uuuuup !"

No, really BiBi, just for a minute, please shut up.

Conversation returns to normal when Bi Bi leaves and heads off to be impressed by the others who, like her, flit between the JF and the Cricket Club on a Sunday afternoon.

After a few more drinks, maybe a few too many, we walk the 30 yards home for something to eat and a quiet night.

What a lovely day !



2016-7-3

(Graham, Fee, Don, Liss, Berit)

We arrived back from Spain at 1 am on Sunday morning.

Liss's friend Berit, whom we had met in Tromso back in February, is over visiting but goes back on Tuesday.

Before we went away we promised that, weather permitting, we would do a short boat trip. The forecast is reasonable so at 11:30 we head down to the marina.

We go around Desborough island, head up the backwater behind Hamm Court.



Of course we have the customary bubbles supplied by Don.

And some nibbles.

Whilst coming back down the backwater the heavens open and we have a sharp heavy shower.

The girls retire down below!

The shower soon passes and the girls resurface.

Graham points out a half-sunken hull against the riverbank.

"That was my first boat!"

Berit looks a bit anxious.

"But I am getting better so we should be OK"

We go past Walton Marina to show Berit The Swan and The Anglers.

Don wants to show her The Weir, but Graham can see that there are boats moored there and the river is too narrow at that point to turn around.

So we go back upstream and Berit takes the helm.



Graham takes back control for mooring and soon we are alongside, power reconnected, canopy up and driving back to Weybridge.

2016-7-10

(Graham, Fee, Claire, Mike)

We finally have a day when we can take Claire and Mike out on Drift A Wey. The weather forecast is a bit mixed, but Claire and Mike are keen to go out for a spin.

We leave the canopy up, but take off the sides. The bank we are hoping to moor up to for lunch (near Shepperton) is packed with weekenders but, having been around Desborough Island, we find a spot near the Minnow. Fee, as always, does the honours food-wise and serves up delicious hot dogs with onions.

Both Claire and Mike have a go at the helm before we head back to the marina.



As fate would have it, the sun comes out as we tie up. We think about going out again but Claire and Mike have promised Leah they will visit later in the afternoon.

Nobody wants to let Leah down so we call it a day.

2016-7-19

(Graham, Fee, Sam, Mark, Kev)

The forecast for the week is hot! Predicted to have the hottest day of the year (so far) on Tuesday.

On Monday, Graham gets an unexpected text from Mark while at work.

"Hi, as the weather is going to be good, are you boating tomorrow?"

"Can do, boat trip after work?"

Sorted!

Tuesday is indeed the hottest day of the year so far; around 30 degrees.

Mark and Sam will come over for 6:30 and we will pick Kev up because trains are delayed (wrong kind of sun melting the tracks?)

By 7 o'clock we are fully loaded with bubbles, beer and picky bits, heading up Desborough Channel towards Shepperton Lock.

We arrive at Shepperton Lock, which by now is unmanned. We moor along side and Graham goes to investigate.

There is one boat in the lock coming downstream but they seem to be struggling with the lock controls. In the interest of moving things along, Graham takes control.

Check All gates closed. All sluices closed.

Downstream sluices open to stage 1.

Downstream sluices open to stage 2.

Downstream gates open.

Downstream sluices closed.

Bye bye other boat.

Graham returns to Drift A Wey where the motley crew are continuing to lighten the load in the beer and bubbles department.

Into the lock, made safe, Graham goes back to the lock controls.

Downstream gates closed.

Check All gates closed. All sluices closed.

Upstream sluices open to stage 1.

Upstream sluices open to stage 2.

Open upstream gates.

Close upstream sluices.

Graham returns to Drift A Wey where the motley crew are continuing to lighten the load in the beer and bubbles department. . . . and off we go



As we head upstream towards Chertsey, Fee starts to bring out the food accompanied by more bubbles.

We moor up and Fee cooks up some prawns in chilli, lime and garlic - delicious!

Mark spots Jimmy Savile in a kayak coming down the river. As she gets closer, Mark realises that Jimmy is in fact a female blonde - much more to his liking!

Whilst tucking into cocktail sausages, dips, stuffed pepperdews and crudites we hear the sound of distant drums. Soon we see a dragon boat coming round the bend. The drum beats are a little irregular, as is the paddling - these are clearly novices!



Dinner over and we head back to base before the sun goes down.

Graham does the honours again at Shepperton Lock and the crew continue to lighten the load in the red wine department.

We switch on our nice new blue cockpit lights and, for the first time, we have to use the navigation lights as the sun is going down.

Mark looks very relaxed . . . that is before the Doritos went flying !

Flying Doritos. . . Sixties rock band ?

Oh no, that was the Flying Burrito Brothers !



We return to Walton Marina, load up the car and head back to Weybridge where we enjoy a nightcap in the Jolly Farmer.

What a lovely stress-free way to spend a summers evening in the company of good friends, after a hard day's work.

2016-09-03

(Graham, Fee, Dave, Caroline)

Dave has not been well for a while and he's never had the opportunity to come on the boat, so now is the time.

He and Caroline come along for a short while aboard with tea and biscuits.

Dave is not well enough for us to leave the mooring, but we have a lovely time over lunch with a chat.



2016-12-04

(Graham, Fee)

It's a cold day with sub-zero temperatures overnight, but it is time for our annual trip to Kingston for Christmas Shopping en bateau.

Having cleared the car windscreen, we drive down to Walton Marina where we then have to clear the boat windscreen! Reliable as ever, the engine starts first time without any problem. A degree of ice-breaking is required to exit the marina, but soon we are under way.



Sunbury Lock is unmanned but we are now seasoned lock operators, fully trained up during the summer, and the transit is achieved without any issues. It's a cold, crispy, sunny day and the cruise down to Molesey lock is very relaxing. Molesey Lock is manned so we make swift progress though there as well and before long we reach Kingston where our mooring point beside John Lewis awaits.

Once the Christmas Shopping list has been exhausted, we enjoy some street food in the market square and then head back to Drift A Wey. With Christmas presents cargo on board it's time to fire up the Christmas Songs playlist as we cruise back through Kingston towards Molesey Lock where we discover that the Lock Keeper has knocked off early.

No problem. First Mate Fee operates Molesey then Sunbury Locks as we go back to Walton Marina where the ice has melted during the day.

We unload the Christmas Presents onto Santa's sleigh and head home.

What a lovely way to spend a pre-Christmas Sunday.