

Danese's Retirement Cruise!

This was something I had always wanted to do – a cruise on the French canals. So when I retired from being Trust Administrator of the Bruce Trust (just a part-time job, I know!) I had more time and Rebecca organised a collection amongst the Trust volunteers and customers which helped to make it a reality – so MANY THANKS to all who contributed!.

Steve did lots of research on the various areas and, although the southern canals were very tempting, travel down there made it very complicated. Luckily, Richard and Sue Lewton, who suggested the holiday, were prepared to come with us and share the cost and experience.

We travelled through the tunnel so arrived early on the morning of 19th September to lovely sunny skies.

We had almost found our way to the base when we were stopped by the French police – Steve was accused of going through a “red fire”. It transpired we had all been so busy looking for signposts, we had missed a red traffic light! Or so the Gendarme claimed (90euro fine!)

Once at Joiny, we were shown round our boat and Steve and Richard had a bit of instruction on the complexities of the steering wheel!



Steve receiving the Handover!

We left the base with just enough time to get through the first couple of locks, which would enable us to moor up near a nice restaurant and to pick up some shopping – well that was the theory. Unfortunately, a rather unhelpful lock keeper on the second lock decided he would not have time to lock us through (even

though the lock was already set in our favour) before it was his “home time”. So our first night was spent in the middle of nowhere! Luckily we had bought wine on the way down and Sue had brought a Chilli just in case!!



Moored on the river Yonne

Once the lock re-opened at 9am we cruised on to the next village and bought some supplies, including bread, pate, cheese etc. for lunch.



Picnic lunch on our sun deck!

Steering with a steering wheel was not easy but fortunately there was plenty of room on the river to wiggle about until we got the hang of it!

We were very lucky with the weather – dry and sunny all week and we were able to cruise south of Auxerre where we did some sightseeing (Auxerre Cathedral is splendid!).



Auxerre

We then left the lovely wide river and headed on to the Canal de Nivernais – which is twinned with the Kennet &

Avon Canal. The Nivernais is a very pretty canal and at each lock was a lock keeper – sometimes a very pretty one! Steve felt this would definitely improve things on the K&A. Some of the lock keepers sold wine or honey!



Similarities with K&A – not many: all the locks were in excellent condition, the footpaths were wide and suitable for walking/cycling or wheelchairs; even the lock keeper's vans in remote areas!!

A lot of the villages close to the canal seemed to only have a baker so we were able to buy croissants for breakfast and bread or quiches for lunch but finding a butcher or supermarket was problematic.



Typical river scene

However, we did have some lovely meals on board and off - particularly the last day where we had a very relaxed Sunday lunch in a pretty courtyard. We saw some lovely countryside and really enjoyed our week cruising in France! I would thoroughly recommend the experience!

Thanks again to everyone who helped make it possible and particularly to Rebecca who organised the collection!