

## **Adventures though Lincolnshire. Part 1.**

We locked through Beverley Lock from the Beck on to the River Hull at 1400 hrs., on Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2008. John with 'French Connection' a RLM 32 motor cruiser of 31 feet loa with a cruising draught of 2' 6" and me with 'Nora Harfield' a Macwester 27 yacht, 27 feet loa with a cruising draught of 4 feet.

Neither boat had ventured further than Keadby up the Trent before so this was to be a journey of discovery for both skippers. John was attempting to reach Nottingham then return via the Stainforth and Keadby canal, Goole and the Ouse.

I was attempting a circular passage with my yacht around the island of Lincolnshire, sometimes historically referred to as 'The Grain Run'. I was hoping to establish the maximum depth for pleasure craft wishing to complete this passage recording the depths encountered.



*Beverley Lock Quay*

A threatening sky with a prospect of showers saw both vessels depart Beverley Quayside at 1805 for Hull Marina. The river gauge showed 2.06m., ample water for the trip. Our departure 4 hours before High Water at Hull meant we would meet the flood tide between Ennerdale and Sutton bridges, which would give our craft plenty of water over the shallows before Stoneferry.



### *Black Swan*

About Wawne we respectfully slowed down for a rare visitor to our river, a large and elegant black swan slowly cruising towards Beverley. Good progress was made to pass underneath all ten bridges. The lowest was Sculcoates which had presented us with an air draught of 9'-6". At 2015 we cleared Sammy's Point into the Humber and minutes later entered the lock at Hull Marina for the evening.

The following morning H.W. was at 0955 with a predicted 8.8m height over Albert Dock sill, an average Spring tide. This height would give us a speedy flood tide with plenty of depth. We hoped to keep the flood with us for the 45.5 nautical miles up to Torksey Lock.

We locked out three hours before local H.W. at 0705 under a still overcast sky with drizzle. The wind was SW 3 - 4 and the estuary a little lumpy. We had decided to cruise at about 5 knots with the flood tide giving us that little bit extra. Underway we saw our speed over the ground was very quickly at 9.6 knots which reassured everyone. Accompanying me was my wife, Jackie. and dog, Fudge, who were both below in fine spirits giving lots of advice and refreshment. I have no doubt that John's crew, his wife Dot, supported him in the same manner.



### *Humber Bridge*

Passing under the Humber Bridge at 0735 we were delighted to see our speed over ground (SOG) was being maintained at 9.5 knots.

0755 Being early on the tide I was a little apprehensive as we entered the new channel recently buoyed through the centre of Redcliffe Middle Sand. The steep sides of the dry banks on our port side rose up 4 or 5 feet with the 32 and 32a port hand buoys protecting, reassuring us it was safe to proceed. We had 16 feet under us and whizzed by at 8.4 knots in the rain.

Shortly after our passage I heard that a pleasure craft being pushed sideways out of this section of the buoyed navigation channel had nearly foundered on this bank from a

crossing flood tide, fortunately this had a good ending but it's a reminder that the tide does not always flow in straight lines or in the direction we expect!

Soon we were off Brough, the rain had stopped allowing us to take in the expansive views towards Trent Falls. Off Whitton village on the South bank it started to rain again. We still had 20 feet of depth and our SOG had slowed to 8.4 knots.

At 0837 we turned to port entering the Trent at the Apex light just over 14 nautical miles from Hull. . Before the turn our speed had been 9.5 knots but minutes into the river it dropped to 6.3 knots. By Burton Stather it had crept back up to 8.9 knots, good, it still looked like we could make Torksey with the flood, another 31 nautical miles!

0935 saw us pass the entrance to Keadby Lock and with the yacht's engine still ticking over nicely at 5 knots we were covering the ground at 9.0 knots with 20 feet under us. Keadby Bridge, now a non-lifting fixed structure was before us. We safely passed beneath the old lifting span with over 19feet clearance. In preparation for the bridges I had lowered and stowed the yachts mast fore and aft over the deck before leaving Beverley Beck. The yacht now only had an air draft of 7'-1". Should I reach Boston, then I hoped to raise the mast there and rig it for sea taking the easy option of sailing to Hull via the Wash and Spurn.

In preparing for the trip I had been told that some parts of the Fossdyke and Witham navigations were shallow and might present a problem, this nearly proved to be the case. None of the recent publications on the navigations published any meaningful depths. The last one to do so was Derek Bowskill in his very comprehensive, 'Northeast Waterways' written over 23 years ago. There he described the passage in his yacht, 'Valcon' as difficult. Was the same still true? I was hoping conditions had improved! Why don't canal guides publish average depths for each section or do they assume all boats have a draught of less than two feet!

Next we passed beneath the starboard arch of the M180 road bridge. This provided us with over 22 feet of air draught in the centre of its span. The river still had a lot more height to make as the flood had another 1¼ hours still to run.

Maintaining our average speed over the ground of 8.5 knots we never had less than 17 feet under the keel as boats swiftly glided past the villages of East and West Butterwick, Susworth, Owston Ferry, Wildsworth and Gunthorpe.



### *Owston Ferry*

We had previously arranged with the lock keeper to stop in the West Stockwith canal basin if we had not been able to keep up with the tide and so he was expecting us. As we were making such good progress the decision was made to carry on and I advised him on VHF accordingly. He came out and gave us a wave as we sped by.

It was 1055 when we took the bend out of West Stockwith, we now had an SOG of 8.4 knots with 23 feet under our keel. Feeling quite safe we pressed on but found we had to avoid an amount of flotsam and jetsam, mainly branches and logs with some household and industrial items, more than I would have expected.

We soon rounded the big bend at Morton, the start of urbanisation before Gainsborough. At 1125 hours we sailed past the substantial newly opened but empty visitor pontoons at Gainsborough and then under the centre arch of the 218 year old three-arched stone road bridge. We had 19 feet air draught but again we were early on the flood. Here Spring tides lift river levels about 9 feet and the flood still had another 1 hour and 10 minutes to run.

As we were keeping a listening watch on VHF channel 6 we heard the skipper of the large commercial barge, 'Heather Rose', making his way at speed up river with the flood. He asked on the radio for a clear passage around the tight bend which lies between

Gainsborough Bridge and the railway viaduct. We could not see him yet but we told him where we were on VHF and waited after the bridge for him to pass. He was travelling at nearly twice our speed. As we followed him through the tight left hand bend I could see why he needed all the room he could muster, with a flood tide behind him he had to go hard over and throttle up to get safely round.

Passing beneath the Railway viaduct's port hand span, one of two, we had 18 feet of depth and an 18 feet air draught.

In the next 7 nm to Torksey we would encounter some tricky shallow areas with less depth so I reduced my engine speed to 4 knots giving me an SOG of 6.4 knots. The scenery now gradually changed; the river banks became lower enabling us to see the fields and meadows which provided us with much more interesting and attractive views. The river's course with its many turns became more tortuous, requiring more attention to our vessel's course and to depth on the bights. I reminded myself I had a keeled yacht with a good flood behind it, if I touched she could be quickly laid over but I had my anchor ready to go in a moment if needed!

As the river wound its course through the corners of the Burton Rounds with its shallow areas, it all looked for a first timer threatening as we followed the bank marks indicating our channel but my depth never dropped below 15 feet.

At Knaith our SOG was 6.4 knots and our depth 13 feet. Reassured by this we approached the Roman paved ford at Littleborough village. Reaching the first port hand mark I stayed to port of the river's centre and here found I had a lowest depth of 13 feet. Now making my course to starboard of centre coming out of the right hand bend I had 8 feet depth over the ford. Have your camera ready, I thought, as this area was particularly attractive. Here we were about 40 minutes into the flood with 1 hour 15 minutes to go before local H.W.

Another mile and we were approaching Marton Mill (Trent Port) where we were again in VHF contact with an approaching commercial barge, 'River Star' who was punching into the flood. He passed safely heading down river. We had 12 feet under our keel as we approached the first port hand marker, a white post with a red can on top. Following our written directions we made our course towards the post and bank then away from it down the centre of the river avoiding the dangerous banks either side. We never had less than 11 feet under us.

From here to Torksey viaduct we had 12 feet under us and with the engine again set at 5 knots were making 7.2 knots over the ground.

Passing beneath the port hand span of the two spanned disused Torksey railway viaduct we had 20 feet clearance with a depth of 13 feet.

1250 we turned into Torksey Cut just as a large commercial barge came up behind us. As we entered the cut we were witness to a cautionary lesson. Entering the cut two narrow boats motored out onto the river, turning right towards the oncoming barge. There was no collision, but it was a near thing.

The 45 nautical miles completed, thankfully problem-free and well satisfied, we both moored to the long visitors' pontoons before the lock and would you believe it, it then started to rain. I noticed that the gauge at the end of the pontoons showed 2.2m. and rising which was important for me as the lock sill was given as 1.09m. We could not have timed it any better arriving 1 ¼ hours before local H.W. and 40 minutes after the flood had started.



*Torksey Cut*

John and Dot decided to stay moored to the pontoons overnight before leaving for Cromwell Lock and I prepared to enter the Fossdyke navigation but much more on that subject in Part II.

Martin Benson. Oct 2008.