

Home in Harrymoth

Many of you will know I have ended up with two boats again this year, returning to a class I previously owned, a Sun Odyssey, the same hull as Bodhran but with a different cockpit layout. I had hoped to have sold on Arty Miss freeing up my berth at Fisherrow so I could get to work on the new boat Harrymoth, tweaking it to my liking. That has not happened yet, forcing me to resort to some “jiggerypokery” and I need to say a big thanks to the folk who helped my juggling act.

I’ve been keeping Harrymoth in Gareloch on the west coast on Cameron Petrie’s mooring, so first of all thanks to him. There are no free moorings at Fisherrow but a little research uncovered the possibility of keeping the boat on the hard standing at Port Seton. I put out a call for help that was thankfully answered by Bryan Tierney, offering to help with the transit, and Dennis Walton offering to drive us and our gear.



To transit the canal you need a lot of extra fenders for the locks, our first challenge was to get them onboard.... in a rubber dinghy..... in the middle of a gale...at night. Conditions were such that I couldn’t see the boat from the slip despite knowing it was only 80 metres away. I found it, but we got soaked in the process.

After a rough night on the mooring, the morning brought a very pleasant passage round to Bowling sea basin where I spent a couple of days preparing Harry for a windy transit across the width of Scotland.

Once we got going through the canal, progress was slow due to staff shortages to man the locks. We did have a wee problem of our own, a broken control cable! We had no control over the speed of the engine, which is not ideal in a narrow canal, so the delays were fortuitous, giving us the chance to effect a repair. What Bryan can do with a length of string is nothing short of brilliant...!

There was one scary moment while Bryan had his hands in the back of the loudly revving engine and a loud yell hailed from the aft cabin. I immediately feared the worse... blood all over the cushions, missing digits. Fortunately it turned out he had only broken a nail, although for a gifted guitar player that is a disaster! After a mug of coffee the brave soldier managed to get over it ok and my nerves returned to a calmer state.



Given our difficulties, the canal staff were keen to stop us, but we managed to convince them that we had full control of our vessel. With the wonders of smartphones we worked out that the Bosun's Locker had the cable we needed in stock. All we needed now was a good samaritan to come to our aid. Linda Harris stepped forwards without hesitation, drove many miles to meet us at Auchinstarry with said cable and some fresh supplies including homemade jam... What a star!

A fine meal was had in Boat house restaurant, in fact we've discovered if you drink a bottle of wine *before* going out, every meal is excellent!

Day three saw Bryan up early and straight to work. With the new cable installed we are soon on our merry way. Once I worked out which way to go that is...I've always found canals tricky places when you reenter from a siding, both directions look the same!

From Falkirk to the Kelpies they rely on volunteers do most of the work, but it would appear they're more used to working with narrow boats, which are much more robust in the locks. There was so much water pouring over lock No 4 that we almost got jackknifed as the canal turned into a flowing river. I had to rely on reverse to to gain some control when we got propelled from the lock. One of the staff helpfully shouted, "Yeah, we call this one Niagra falls!"



The trauma was almost forgotten by the time we reached the splendour of the Kelpies.



Bryan's wife Jayne arrived to grab Bryan to spend a night at home. I found a pub in Grangemouth for a couple of pints and then back to catch up on more Game of Thrones onboard.

The forecast is not good, ex - Hurricane Ophelia has been sending dirt our way and now storm Brian is about to hit. Strong winds are forecast across the whole country, but they are not to peak until late afternoon and I don't have that far to go, I reckon I'll chance it! I motored Harrymoth out of the shelter of the canal, down the river Carron and into the Forth. The boat has picked up so many

barnacles over the summer that I can only make a maximum speed of 4.5 knots. That was fine in the canal, but in the open sea it's a real hindrance especially as I have stem the incoming tide. I made very slow progress to Port Edgar, not ideal given the forecast! Bryan was there to meet me and to help with the ropes to secure her for the impending gale. Once everything was double checked we set off for home.



One option was to return to Harrymoth in the late evening, leaving Port Edgar at 22.00 to catch the rising tide at Fisherrow. This would give me time to clean her at Fisherrow, but the Forth was still quite lively after the gale, a single handed, night sail in those conditions didn't sound appealing. It would be better to ask someone to join me, share my pain as it were. Wracking my brain, I remembered Freya hadn't managed to sail this year.....how could she refuse an opportunity of a dark, slow and possibly wet passage from Port Edgar? A quick text and she replied, "I think I can manage that". I thought it best not to mention that we can't actually sail as the mast is still stapled along the length of the boat and we can only motor at 4 knots.



Dennis had agreed to drive us over, he had just come from work, so a late tea for him. We were soon on our way, Freya was happy on the helm, well maybe happy is overstating it, but she certainly got the hang of quickly! The sea state was lumpy and it was very dark so we were relying on the GPS to keep us right. On the plus side, we were rewarded with a spectacular photo of the bridges. We reached the working berth at Fisherrow at 01.20, quickly tied Harry up then off home to bed, poor Freya had an early start at work in a few hours.

In the morning Bryan turned up with his power washer and set about the decks so I had my first chance to get rid of the barnacles which had hampered our progress from leaving the mooring in the Gareloch 8 days previously. The tide was soon filling the harbour so we relayed a car to Port Seton, charged back to Fisherrow, jumped on board, cast off the lines. Making better speed now with a cleaner bottom, we arrived in Port Seton with plenty of time. The Hiab arrived and plucked Harrymoth out of the harbour with ease and set her down next to her neighbours for the winter, a couple of small motor boats in the corner of the car park.

All done, mission accomplished..."Bloody Boats!"

Despite the faffs, I must admit I loved the journey, it was a great end to the season. I'd like to say a huge thanks to the Dream Team, Bryan, Dennis, Linda, Freya and to Jane who never seems to mind when I take off for a week or so at short notice.

