

## The Rashbrooks on Tour 2012

### A Diary of a Canal Boat Holiday

Day 1 – Saturday, Worcester, West Midlands

It's 7.45 am and everyone is up and very excited about our coming trip! It's the first time in around 3 weeks that I have seen our son Stuart awake and compos mentis before midday! He finished High School and GCSE exams recently and has been taking full advantage of his 'nothing to do' status! Our daughter Sarah 14, is equally excited as she is bringing her bestest friend Jade along on the trip too. Simon, my husband makes a last trip to Tesco to get provisions for the first night and day of our holiday – the workings for a full English breakfast (my only insistence on a self-catering holiday), sausages, bacon, eggs, baked beans, tomatoes, bread etc. and little snacks for the kids too – biscuits, crisps, ham and cheese for sandwiches – and we mustn't forget those little essentials – salt, pepper, ketchup, mayo, butter, cooking oil, toilet paper etc.!

Jade and Sarah are ready and in the car sitting, waiting, waiting for us to get off and we finally do around 11.00.am – we are hoping to get to Anderton marina (fairly near Manchester) around 1.00 pm. We didn't reckon on the M6 though. Oh no. About an hours delay but we are driving into the marina about 1.30pm.

Chrissie – a lovely lady, who I have spoken to many a time on the phone in my capacity as a booking officer for UK BOAT HIRE, is there to greet us. Unfortunately our boat "Dusky Thrush" is not quite ready yet so we wander down to have a look at the Anderton Boat Lift, only about 5 minutes walk away. What a magnificent feat of engineering! We are lucky enough to actually see a boat being lifted and coming onto the canal – amazing! Chrissie rings me on my mobile – the boat is ready!! We head back to the marina – thankfully we are able to drive the car down onto the jetty where the boat is moored and unpack from there. The girls are amazed by their twin room and the fact that they have a bathroom of their own – Stuart is amazed he is having a double bed all to himself, and I am amazed and very thankful that the kitchen is great. Full sized cooker with grill, every utensil you could want – even down to egg cups and a toast rack. A microwave and a toaster even!



We are unpacked – I jump off and ask a couple of engineers if they could talk us through the boat. Simon and I have been canal boating before but every boat is different – and this is the first time we will have to ‘convert’ the dining area into a bedroom – I want to know how to do it!! Simon can worry about things like the weed hatch! Trevor – again a lovely friendly chap shows us around the boat – and we are free to leave. Now.... Who is going to drive out of the marina – in front of all these staff and guests??!! Simon draws the short straw and we are off!!

Turning left out of the marina a heron sits watching us and it’s as if he is seeing us off. It’s about 3 hours cruising to Middlewich which is where we are planning to spend our first night. Our planned route is Chester and return – about 32 hours cruising and 44 locks there and back. We figure we have a crew of teenagers – this will be helpful, but also not so many locks that it will put them off!

Ah it’s so lovely to be back on the canal. After that first hairy turn out of the marina we are cruising through countryside and rushes, and huge amounts of giant rhubarb bizarrely! About 20 minutes in we spot a very convenient place to moor up on our return – because the boat needs to be back in the marina first thing next Saturday it is good to have a plan. Just by The Salt Marsh pub sign there is plenty of nice mooring space. A couple of times the canal gets very narrow and shallow with a couple of very sharp turns – have to admit we scraped the boat a couple of times the turns were so sharp! Out of practice I think! But such lovely countryside – herons, ducks, swallows, rabbits – all can be seen on this stretch. Very soon we are coming up to Northwich – the countryside suddenly becomes ravaged and desolate – a huge factory formerly an ICI works, now TATA, comes into view and an unholy smell is emitting from it! Stuart suddenly appears from nowhere – “What is that stink!?” – when you actually look closely at the factory though it makes you feel quite awed – we

built this – someone built this – especially poignant because of the Olympic opening ceremony last night - miles and miles of twisting pipes and chimneys and even though there is not a soul to be seen it is obviously in working order – steam/smoke coming from the chimneys and the whole thing making a sort of hum. Stuart makes the observation that the whole thing looks like a set from Saw 2!  
I agree.



Saw 2



I mean really SAW 2 ?!

Onwards to more beautiful countryside – very calm and still – we have yet to pass a boat. Just after Bridge 182 is a house with lots of Dove coots in the garden – your boat will scare the doves into flight – a lovely sight and look out for Bridge 179 – just by it is the cutest little black and white house which looks like it was built of Lego! So sweet. We pass natural reservoirs caused by subsidence in the canal – they are fenced off because several wrecked boats still remain – you can see the tops of a couple looking like dinosaur skeletons!



#### Dinosaur skeleton?!

You can tell when we are approaching Middlewich – suddenly there are houses and gardens so we start looking out for a place to moor – oh my goodness the Big Lock will be just around the corner – must find a place, must find a place – however BE WARNED, it turns out all the moorings before the first lock are permit holders only – so it looks like we are going to have to get out and do our first ever broad lock!

The girls and I jump ashore – and enticingly we can smell food! Good food like, steak and chips! We get through the lock with no problems – Sarah is a bit of an expert because she also did the Oxford canal last year with her Aunt and Uncle and Grandparents – and moor up on the other side – but again be warned, everyone in the pub is watching your every move! Ooh we can all feel our taste buds watering with the smell of that pub!

So without much further ado we get changed and head for the pub – it is about 6.30pm on a Saturday night, and woe is me no room at the Inn! We should have booked! Not deterred we go into Middlewich (up the towpath, up the steps towards town centre) and finally settle on a Chinese restaurant, The Alhambra on the main street. Food is lovely and apparently the Karaoke starts about 10pm (!) but we are now all starting to droop with the excitement of the day and head back to the boat, tummy's full and looking forward to a new day!

Day 2 Sunday

Simon and I are up at 6am – neither of us has slept too well – unused to the narrower bed, but then neither of us ever sleep well on our first night away, even in the plushiest hotels! We both know that tonight we will sleep like babies. There is not a sound from the kids – so we put the kettle on, make coffee and sit on the front of the boat listening to the sounds of the canal – it is a beautiful sunny morning, quiet and still, only interrupted occasionally by some early morning dog walkers who all smile and nod good morning. Life is good and we can't wait to get started. Around 7.30 I decide to start breakfast and the smell of frying sausages soon brings the kids to!! We have a hearty breakfast and then the children and I walk into town to Tesco to buy provisions for that night. Looking at the map (Nicholson's Guide number 4) we are planning to get as far as Barbridge junction today or perhaps a bit further and it is an isolated spot, so we will be eating on board today. We calculate it will take us about 5-6- hours cruising to reach this spot – count up the miles you want to travel, add the number of locks and divide by 3 – this will give you the number of hours it should take you. Meanwhile Simon checks the weed hatch – a very important job, we don't want to stop because of something wrapped around our propeller!



#### Early morning in Middlewich

We need to fill up our water tank if we are going to spend a whole day and night on the boat and conveniently there is a water point just beyond the next bridge (number 172). So we cruise on up to there and stop for about 20 minutes to fill up.

Now we are off in earnest and we know there are 4 locks coming up in pretty quick succession. The canal is starting to look a little busier – a few boats have passed us earlier – but we do not have to

queue at all for the first 3 locks – I get off with the girls to help, but they are absolutely fine and seem to have it sussed to a tee so I start to look forward to being able to cruise with Simon at the stern! Be warned the 4<sup>th</sup> lock is on the Shroppie and to get to it there is a very sharp right turn off the Trent and Mersey under the Wardle bridge. Very sweetly there is a plaque on the bridge announcing Wardle canal, the world's shortest, around 50 yards! Which is the distance to this 4<sup>th</sup> lock. In retrospect we should have sent someone ahead to check for boats emerging from this tunnel as this is a 3 way junction, but we are lucky and as we turn there is just one boat ahead of us and one coming out of the lock towards us so we draw to the side and I hold the middle rope as this boat cruises past us and the boat in front of us goes in. Just a short time later and another boat comes down and out and we take its place – very lucky, less work for the girls! It's always a good idea to send someone ahead to check for oncoming boats – apart from anything else, canal etiquette for example, it saves both time and water!

There is a little stretch now before the next lock and if you wanted to moor up just outside of Middlewich this would be a good spot. Long straight stretches of canal with a very good grassy towpath on the right and houses on the left with their gardens leading to the canals edge. Then another lock, still no queue.

We are now on the Shropshire Union canal, Middlewich branch, and will be until Barbridge where this part meets the Shroppie main line. It is beautiful cruising, we all take turns at steering the boat, even Jade, the complete novice and she turns out to be a natural. We moor up for an hour or so about 2.30 pm and have a bite to eat, just sandwiches and coffee and carry on, we are making such good time we aim to turn at Barbridge to get onto the main line and then find moorings for the night.



#### Moored up

Along this stretch there is plenty to see, beautiful wooded canal banks, in places the canal becomes so wide it looks more like a river, flat green fields full of cows and the unique 'smell' of the country which I love, having lived in the Welsh countryside for a couple of years but the kids hate! There are a couple of large marinas too where you can moor up and get water or dispose of your rubbish. The 'Aquaduct Marina' is the largest and the first one you come to. They are a very big concern, even building boats too, and there is a café/restaurant if you want to stop for refreshments. Moorings, electricity and pump outs are available if required. For a fee.

Very shortly after this marina is Minshull lock – no problems here and then again the canal continues, occasionally wide, occasionally narrow, sometimes straight, sometimes snaking and always beautiful and so relaxing. There are a couple of very heavy showers but then bright hot sunshine again. Simon cracks open a beer and I have a long gin and tonic. Lush!

We now come to the second marina . 'Venetian Marina' is smaller than Aquaduct and there is a lock here too, Cholmondeston. There is a boat waiting in front of us and one coming down too. The girls and I run (well they run, and I stroll!) up to the locks and there is a chap there who at first I assume belongs to either the boat coming down or the boat in front of us, but after some confusion it transpires that he just does this for fun! He comes down to various locks along the Shroppie and 'helps' boats coming through. I wonder whether he is expecting a 'tip' and so ask him again if he does it just for fun and he says yes, so I just let him help! Each to their own I say. I personally don't

think locks are that much fun without the payback of travelling on a boat and getting somewhere!  
But who am I to say?!

We travel on through the lock and moored up just on the other side, is a small motor cruiser and the owner of this is in a virtual apoplectic rage! Screaming at us as we cruise by on tick-over at what a t\*\*t this chap is – “I’m only on pins here you know, that t\*\*t is a f\*\*\*\*\*g idiot – not you sir, no not you sir, YOU know what you’re doing”. Feeling a strange mixture of pride in our cruising skills, sorrow for the poor chap trying to help for a hobby, and perplexed at this owner’s rage we carry on. There is no accounting for folk. One would think that a) get proper mooring irons and b) don’t moor right by a lock – you are not supposed to after all...

We carry on, not far to the junction now and no more excitement for the time being. There is no onward traffic at the junction luckily so here is a sharp right again, but easier in some respects because there is a much wider turning curve than at Wardle. Plus it is getting later now, so we have not passed a boat for a while. We cruise for about 10 minutes until the sound of the A31 has diminished, and start to pass a lot of moored boats and no spaces. Help! Eventually we find a space, but the canal is too shallow to moor up flush to the towpath so Simon hops off while Stuart and I hold the ropes and trots off around the corner. He comes back with a beautiful smile – just around this corner is miles of empty mooring space, fairly wild and just lovely, just what we are looking for.

We moor up. Time for dinner – the girls have a shower, then Stuart, while I cook tea. We have that and then Simon and I have a shower whilst the kids wash up. Then it’s time to put a DVD on – we try for some TV reception – what’s happening in the Olympics for instance? But with no joy – so kids have first choice and Hangover 2 it is. Questionable taste, but very, very funny!

And so to bed.

Day 3 Monday

Today is Chester day! Simon and I wake up early again, but as predicted we slept much, much better and are very well rested and happy. The sun is shining again and I predict it is going to be a glorious day - BIG mistake.

Chrissie at Anderton marina where we set off had suggested that we moor up at Christleton just outside Chester and take the bus into town, thus avoiding 5 broad locks going down into Chester and around 3 hours cruising each way, but we decide that we want to go right into Chester. Therefore the plan tonight is to moor up at Christleton and then Tuesday morning go on into Chester.

After another fry up (this holiday is not going to be good for our cholesterol levels!) we set off and before we know it are at Bunbury staircase lock. This is going to be quite scary as we have never experienced one of these before! As we draw closer we spy “Brent Goose”, one of UK Boat Hire’s Alvechurch fleet. Like our boat but an eight berth so slightly longer. This boat was leaving Anderton as we did and is crewed with 4 Swedish couples we had been told. For all I know I may have booked their holiday! We glide up next to them as they are waiting for 2 boats to come through from the other side. Simon starts to mildly panic as the small weir to the right of us is starting to draw our boat towards it. I grab a rope and slide it through Brent Goose’s hand rail and we are safe. There are

now about 10 adults milling about the locks from Brent and the oncoming boats and so I decide to stay put. Too many cooks and all that. I am sat on the front and Simon is at the stern as usual. The girls are off the boat and at the lock but nobody is letting them do anything. I think they are vaguely relieved! We float on through into the lock and in no time at all we are through. The Swede's are very jolly and friendly and Simon discovers I later find out that they are on a beer tour and on a mission to go to as many pubs as they can manage! We sail on out first and get going. The relief is tremendous. These staircase locks can be quite tricky I've been told but that all went swimmingly!



Inside the staircase, just leaving into bottom lock!

We now come to a stretch of lovely winding canal before Tilstone lock where we go through with an 'owned' boat "Nobby's Pride" whose owner is on his own with just his dog for company. This dog likes getting off at the lock and tearing down the tow path to the next lock, hilariously barking all the way. We never do discover the name of this owner but encounter him and his boat several times and therefore I'll refer to him as Nobby. The next lock is Beeston Stone lock and again we go through with Nobby. He has been having trouble with his gear box apparently. Only bought it in March, brand new and has had to call them out 3 times already! He's off to see a mate in Chester who works at the museum. I think he is grateful that the girls are giving us all a helping hand.



#### Nobby! And Simon

We've been advised by an oncoming boat that the next one, Beeston Iron lock should only take one boat at a time despite it being a broad lock, the reason being that there are shards of metal sticking out and if 2 boats go through, one might get 'caught' on a sticky out bit and become wedged. Sounds scary so we comply, thus leaving Nobby and dog behind. I look for sticky out bits and can't spot any but I guess they can be so small you couldn't spot them, or maybe just below the surface of the water? One more lock to go through (Wharton) with no problems and then it is a long stretch to Christleton.

We now come to the bit we enjoyed the least – well the *only* part we didn't enjoy really and that was only because of the weather - a long, looong stretch of water, with literally hundreds of boats moored either side, it has now started to pour with rain, the teenagers have retreated inside and are playing 'Cheat' and Simon and I are left outside in the pouring rain, taking turns at the tiller cruising at 'tick-over' as the channel is so narrow. Sometimes it is fascinating just looking at the different boats – even their names are interesting, from the mundane Elizabeth, Anne, Jane, to the unusual Singing Ninny and Lazydazeee, to the bizarre Jigajogjog, to the romantic Nocturne and then the really really out there Lord Byron's Maggot! But mostly when you are standing in the pouring rain and it's a bit cold, it's all a bit boring really. We completely missed Beeston castle in the distance on the left because it was raining so hard! But it is there because we saw it on the way back!

Finally, finally the rain stops and we begin to approach civilisation – more houses start to appear – you can see Waverton church tower, and we start to get quite excited because a glimpse of sun is

spotted. Time for a beer and a G&T !! The children emerge from their cocoon and sit on the front and we are suddenly on the very outskirts of Chester and therefore near Christleton. Do you know how we could tell? The houses! Suddenly on our right are virtual mansions with great sweeping gardens down to the water's edge fringed with weeping willow trees. Absolutely stunning but a hazard for steering the boat! As happens in towns and cities, the canal becomes narrower and the willows on the right coupled with the moorings on the left make navigating a tricky and perilous business, especially at tick-over which you must travel at in these circumstances. We don't think this is quite WAG country yet – I imagine *their* houses will be on the river, not the canal, but oh my goodness you can almost taste the money here! I would love to own a house here, it is so breathtakingly pretty.



**How lovely is this?!**

We cruise along very slowly and see a tall building with 'Inkeepers Lodge' on the side facing us. We think this is the Cheshire Cat in the guide book but are not sure, and anyway it's too late now, we are passed it and there are still no moorings. (It was the Cheshire Cat, so when you see that sign, look for moorings straight away). We pass Nobby's Pride and wonder how he got ahead of us. We had stopped for a quick break but I think it was raining so much we didn't notice any boats passing! We decide we must draw in to the very next space, which turns out to be, as is our wont, too shallow again, so we moor up regardless and Simon and Stu stroll on ahead to see what they can see. They come back triumphantly! Just a small distance ahead is a perfect mooring and right near a Harvester pub too!! We are home, safe, and though not too dry at least not too wet either!

We cruise into this space and prepare to go out for tea. Obviously this takes the girls an hour or so, but that's fine, there is plenty more beer and gin! By the time we get to the pub, Simon and I are very sweetly merry and happy! We deserve it after such an afternoon don't we? The Harvester is very busy for a Monday so we get a drink and take it outside to sit where the sun is now bright and hot again, very peculiar weather, but this is Britain after all. We are eventually called to our table where we all have an absolutely delicious meal, steaks, burgers, pasta, salads you name it, they've got it. Except chicken, which I ordered and they are most famous for but they had run out! On a Monday night! I swapped to steak and it was lovely, no question.

Back to the boat where we play a game of Tension and the children all laugh at us because we are squiffy and then to bed. Lovely end to a mostly lovely day.

#### Day 4 Tuesday

Simon and I have a lie in until nearly 7.30 today, but the kids are still asleep, so this time we haul out the coffee maker and brew a cup of real coffee. We remembered to bring filters! Some of the boats have cafeteries and some have coffee machines. We've bought coffee suitable for any coffee maker and filters just in case. The sun is out again and we sit on the front again enjoying the view. This morning we have toasted rolls with butter and coffee and make an 'early for us' start, we're off by 10 am. We need to get water again which is just 2 minutes down the canal just before bridge 122. Unfortunately there is a breach in the canal bank just here so we have to hold the boat with ropes whilst we fill up. And of course this time it takes longer as it's been 2 days since we did it. About an hour later we are on our way properly. There are 5 broad locks to go through to Chester town centre, and not much cruising between locks. The first is Christleton which we do on our own.

We are so lucky with our lock companions, this time we have a retired couple, he looks to be ex RAF (he has an RAF mug, but he just seems that way too) and has been on the water for 3 weeks now, enjoyed last week because of the sun, but the previous two have been miserable because of the weather. They own their boat, live in Lincoln and his wife is busy looking out for a canal side property with moorings for them to buy. He thinks, unsurprisingly that Chester may be too expensive! We pass 2 ex lock-keepers cottages for sale, the one has a conservatory and a bar his wife informs him. He rolls his eyes at Simon and me. Poor bloke. We go through Greenfield and Tarvin and Chemistry locks together and then they stop to get water – this is not marked on our map! Wish we had waited because here there are proper moorings. We will remember this on the way back. Now we can see to the left refurbished canal side properties, restaurants, bars, penthouse style flats and apartments and after the last lock we will do, Hoole Lane, on the left, is The Mill House Hotel which Simon and I stayed in on our wedding night, 18 years ago tomorrow, also coincidentally my birthday!

We are going very, very slowly now because we know the last turning point we come to is just before bridge 123E. BE WARNED, it comes up very quickly and the turning point is *directly* in front of this bridge. We attempt to turn, thinking we can moor facing the right way for tomorrow, although we have seen precious few spaces. Needless to say we make a right hash of it, fail miserably, and to add insult to injury are being *photographed* by tourists from the bridge, and cheered from clients in

the pub by the canal side. For the first time ever I can remember Simon goes red faced, probably not helped by my being in hysterical laughter!

The Brent Goose is moored up right outside this very pub and as we are drifting aimlessly about trying to decide what to do, the Swedes all come out of the pub, looking very cheerful (it's only 12.30 but who's judging?!) – and thank goodness they are moving on. They get going quite quickly, I think they sense our embarrassing plight and we take their place. We are still facing the wrong way for tomorrow, but hey we will worry about that tomorrow too!



**Moored up in Chester facing wrong way ! You can see the winding hole and how close to the bridge it is**

A little stop for a rest and to soothe our battered egos and we lock up the boat and walk into town, turn left at the bridge, and in literally 2 minutes you are right in the town centre. Oh my goodness, Chester is quite the place to be if you like shopping. We were looking out for a Greggs because we all fancy a sausage roll or such like for lunch (and Jade's mum works in Gregg's in Worcester) but no joy. We have the poshest restaurants known to man – Carluccios', Jamies's, etc which are lovely no doubt, but beyond our price range just for lunch, so eventually we find the rough end of town where there is a Burger King and a KFC but no Gregg's. ☹️ We decide to get a cone of chips each and it begins raining again and so we wander back to the boat and have another little rest.

Time for showers again and it's off out, still pouring with rain. Simon has had a bit of a scout round – the pub we moored by looks nice, but so do quite a lot of the ones we passed earlier. We eventually settle on 'Swiftys Bar'. It turns out to be absolutely lovely home made food from scratch – Simon and I have a fantastically tasty steak and ale pie with mash for him, chips for me, Stu has sausage

and mash, the girls have chicken and bacon – lovely food, but it has to be said it also had sticky tables and big screen TV's. They can surely do better than this. When we walk back, the pub we are next to has 4 people in it ( The Lock Keeper). The pub we have just left had about 6 people plus us in it. I know it's only Tuesday and it's raining, but this is Chester, and it's the school holidays and these places are in a prime location. It has brought home to both Simon and me how hard these times are.

Back home to the boat and the kids are in a chatty mood for some reason, so we talk for ages, telling funny stories and cracking jokes and then eventually we put on another DVD, this time Alan Carr's Spexy Beast which both Stu and I have watched but we all laugh like drains and then go to bed. Lovely day again in spite of the rain.

Day 5 Wednesday

Croissants for breakfast today and it is my birthday so cards and a couple of presents too. Lovely jubbly. I do feel a bit too old at 47 for this now though, so hurry on to chivvying people along to get ready for the off!



[I love ducklings - so sweet !](#)

We manage to turn the boat today with no trouble whatsoever. We have both re-studied the British Waterways Boater's Handbook and are confident and ready and everything goes according to plan – the boys have been to Tesco's, just a minute's walk away literally and we have provisions for tonight

because today we are planning to be where we were on Sunday night, just before Barbridge junction. We remember to get water just after Hoole Lane Lock and we are on our way.

#### RETURN JOURNEY

I am not going to bore you all with the details of the return journey – what I would say is that return routes are pretty good because going back you pass things at a different time of day and therefore get a different perspective and viewpoint – which you also get from going in a different direction – for instance we saw quite clearly Beeston Castle on the way back, and coming out of Chester we saw The Cheshire Cat pub and just how large and impressive that pub was. I wish we had at least tried a beer there. The locks were pretty much the same, at least as far as the staircase lock – there we ran into problems which I will tell you about because if you are a novice, which we essentially are, you could come across too.

We approach the staircase lock past a load of Anglo Welsh boats moored up, unused (bad times again) and a boat is coming out. The girls and I jump off and run up. We are on our own, it's about 6.00 pm on Wednesday, we are all getting a bit hungry and tired and ready to moor up which we plan to right after this. By the way we have just come through Beeston which is a local town for local people! Do not stop there if you have a choice! Ignore what it says in the Guide, there is no village shop, the café looks transport/greasy caff at the very least and the little chandlery/boat shop there on the canal bank, well, the owner is distinctly unfriendly and does not like hirers.



Sarah and Jade playing Titanic!

Anyway I read the instructions – ensure all paddles closed and top lock full. Run up to top lock – yes it's full, yes all paddles closed, yes full steam ahead. So Simon steers the boat into bottom lock, we open the paddles on the middle lock and open the gates – LUCKILY, very luckily he notices that if he steers through, he will scrape the cill! So we close the gates, fill top lock a bit more and open middle gates and try again. This time, because of where he is already and the water pouring in from top lock, it is just overflowing the bottom gate! He is shouting at us, I am shouting at him – it's just awful and I am so glad that there is nobody around to witness this.

Eventually we all take a deep breath and start again. We empty bottom lock, fill top lock – the problem has been that though top *looked* like it was full it was probably a meter from the top. This time it works like a dream but by the time we moor up we are all a little het up to say the least. Very quick pizza for tea that night!!

Strangely going back the only time we queued was at Cholmondeston where there were 4 boats waiting and the 'helper' was still there and so was the 'angry moorer' but his language was even more fruity this time – however Simon got the nod and wink, he was OK. Glad he didn't see us on the staircase! One has got to wonder whether this is a personal war going on between the 2 of them. However, it is amusing for those passing through!

After that, traffic seemed to disperse somehow. We remembered to send someone (me) to look for boats at the Wardle junction and glad we did because this time there was a lot of congestion – maybe because it was a different time of day – there were boats waiting on the Trent and Mersey side arguing like nobody's business. Personally I can never see the point – this is supposed to be a relaxing holiday/way of life. I just don't see the point in getting into pointless disputes. Anyway Simon turned that boat like it was on a sixpence and put all those owners to shame.

We remembered to get water before mooring up at Middlewich and we remembered to book ahead for The Big Lock pub which turned out to be sublime.

We remembered where we were going to moor just before Anderton the next day and we didn't scrape the boat once this time.

And on our last night the kids wanted to play Monopoly which we hate with a vengeance and they got fed up eventually after 3 hours and decided it was a boring game! Result!

And finally on Saturday morning we cruised into Anderton and the same Heron was waiting to greet us and that is the end.

Hopefully see you next year

Becky Rashbrook, Booking Office Administrator, ABC Boat Hire (formerly UK Boat Hire)



Sarah and Jade at work!



Jade and Sarah relaxing!



Sarah and Jade  
chatting!!



Stu, me and Dad looking a bit lost!



Taking off!  
1



Woah! Looks broken! (It isn't)