

Three men in Three boats on the Newport Canal - 2014

It all started with a chance remark from an old boater in his seventies :- "I miss those paddles on the Montgomery canal Dingy Dawdle, is there somewhere else we can go?"



For those who don't know, there was a dingy dawdle held every year on the Montgomery Canal for 25 years until 4 years ago when it was replaced with a triathlon. It drew waterway supporters from far and wide with all manner of canoes, rowing boats and even coracles. Each year a different length was chosen that was mostly in water but with some lowered bridges and some road crossings to portage, often the A483.

The aim was to raise awareness with good publicity, draw new people into the waterways movement and a by-product was that the year's chosen length had a bit of a spruce up from BW (now CRT)

Roll-on to 2014 and, with the support of the SNCT and the agreement of Telford and Wrekin Council, Natural England, the local angling clubs and Newport Town Council, the 12th of July found our little group beside the lock by the Black Shed in Newport.

Since I had helped at the Balsam bash in the morning and discovered the water lilies upstream to be almost impassable, I did not feel like navigating them a third time. The decision was therefore made to start off downstream and head west towards Edgmond.

This meant loading the boat trolleys and passing under the bridge to find a suitable launch point. We reached the place after only shedding one load, canoe wheels being a bit of a balancing act. A suitable spot was found for our septuagenarian canoeist and he gracefully slid in with barely a ripple. Once we were all in, the paddle to Tickethouse Lock was simple, the weed being not as much of a problem as the impenetrable lilies. I was reminded that canals with moving boats tend not to choke up with weeds and lilies!

Portaging round locks is easier when you have more hands, particularly with a trained instructor like Mike Ward helping. The least confident paddler is able to be assisted from in the canoe and onto the bank. Dragging the boats in and out is a fairly heavy effort and would be much simpler with some simple wooden rollers or sliders.

The paddle down to the big pool at the end was splendid and we were soon back at the lock for another portage. The launch sites were generally easier getting in than out due to gravity being a good assistant through sloping grass. When we found ourselves back at

the Black Shed, saw the lateness of the hour and thought of the dense barrier of lilies, we made the wise decision to call it a day. The upstream trip can wait for another day.

It may be 20 years since there have been pleasure boats on the Newport branch. Let's hope it's not another 20 years until it happens again.

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