

A life, and a boat, of two halves

Well I suppose it's better than half a life, or an empty life, and yes, a boat does have two halves.

We are now spending just over half of our time on the boat and the remainder back at the park home in Warton. It's a bit frustrating to be honest. The time spent at the marina is everything we had hoped for; we are surrounded by nature and wildlife, our neighbours are lovely and always helpful and we are enjoying making the boat our

own and our home. By contrast, back in Warton, we find ourselves living in the shell of our former dwelling as we gradually divest it of our belongings. We are trying to find a balance of keeping it looking lived in to engage prospective buyers whilst taking sufficient of our chattels to the boat to make that our cosy home. It's a balance that results in us always needing the one thing that is in the other place. Far too many of our conversations start with the phrase, 'did we bring'...., and usually the answer is 'no'. Hopefully we will sell

the park home soon or at least Gill will find work in Rufford and we can make more of a definite move to our new life afloat. In the mean time.....

I like being somewhere new and undiscovered and at the moment that includes the boat, the marina and the surrounding area. We seem to flit between getting to know our neighbours, discovering new and beautiful footpaths to explore and pulling apart various bits of the boat to work out where and how, we are going to keep everything when we do eventually

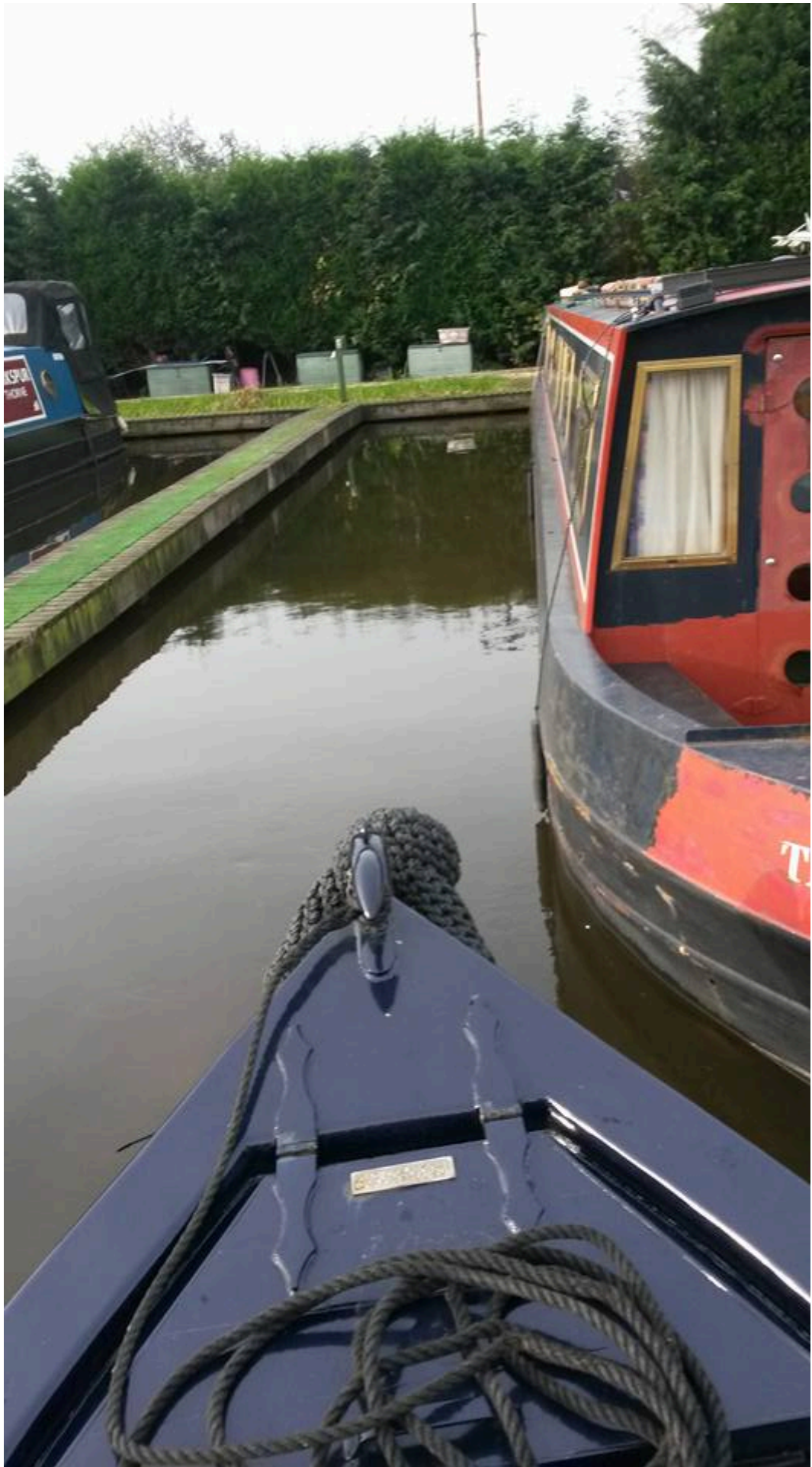
get it on board. And as if that isn't enough to keep us occupied there is always the distraction of what has turned out to be a fantastic local hostelry in the village. Great food, great beer and, did I mention the Ukulele playing? We have discovered a lovely five mile walk that takes us along the towpath and country lanes to [Mere Sands Wood wildlife reserve](#) and back to the village and we have already had close encounters with Kingfishers, Water Voles and Tawny Owls all within a mile or two of our new home. It's fabulous.



Kingfisher by Gill Pearson

Whilst we have been roundly entertained by the local fauna, I have been doing my best to entertain the other residents of the marina by moving our boat about. Boat movements aren't that common now that winter is upon us so whenever the throaty throb of a diesel engine alerts everyone to some activity they all come out to watch. Particularly if the boat in question belongs to a complete novice like myself. Mutterings of "this should be funny" could be heard from all corners of the water as Gill and I prepared to

leave our mooring. Popping over to the service point to fill up with diesel seemed like a simple enough operation to me so I thought I would spice it up a little by turning the boat around at the same time. We had originally moored with the pointy bit towards the land and having cleaned half the boat from our jetty we needed to swap it about to get at the other side.



Leaving our mooring to do some
entertaining

We managed the re-fuelling easily enough and then I began to reverse vaguely back towards mooring point number 98 with something I had read occupying my mind: "narrow boats are notoriously difficult to steer backwards". I can now vouch for that, they are.

It felt as if I was trying to coax fifty seven feet of seven foot wide wriggling python into an eight foot wide slot that I could swear was moving. By the time I managed to 'engage' with the end

of our jetty at the third attempt the spectators standing on the other boats were probably wishing they had made a sandwich and flask of tea for the occasion. I think I was supposed to 'drive' our beast gently backwards along our berth but in reality Gill and I just dragged it there using the ropes. It was more like a round of The World's Strongest Man (and woman) than a lesson in boat handling but never mind, I'm sure everybody but us enjoyed it.



Are you sure it will go in
there?

The next challenge is to take the

boat down the canal towards Sollom where there is supposedly a winding hole where we can turn around before heading back. We wandered down there this morning to take a look and the 'hole' looks about two inches wider than our boat is long. That should be interesting I thought. Perhaps we should go under the cover of darkness for our first attempt.