

We are coming for you Liverpool

I am sitting in the boat listening to rain rattling on the roof and watching the branches of a large oak waving in the strong breeze on the opposite bank. Spring, it would appear, is back on hold and it seems like a good excuse for a lazy day off.

We left the marina on a glorious sunny morning four days ago and other than it being a little chilly, and occasionally breezy, it really has been a wonderful

start to our journey to Liverpool. The passage into the historic docks is controlled by the Canal and River Trust and we are booked to go in on the 4th of May. In contrast to the whole ethos of life on a narrow boat we have a schedule to stick to but rather than it creating any sense of urgency it simply means that we have a surplus of time on our hands and can afford to sit out today's unseasonal weather.



Bye everybody, see you in six
months

Pulling out of our home berth last Saturday was a strange mixture of the kind of excitement that comes with the start of any new adventure tinged with a modicum of sadness. We were leaving behind a wonderful bunch of new friends and a community that has enveloped us with warmth and support during our brief time on the marina. One of our neighbours gave us a farewell blast on his horn to send us on our way but we mistook it for a warning, thinking another boat was approaching as we emerged from the

marina entrance. I suspect they are still chuckling now at my hasty engagement of reverse to avoid being sunk before we had even begun our journey.

Typical of the type of people we have found ourselves surrounded by in our new home, Paul and Dave were waiting for us just around the first corner to help us out at the lock. This meant that I could stay on the boat with Gill while she had a go at steering it in and controlling it as the lock filled up. The process is more daunting than difficult and she passed her

first test with flying colours and I am pleased to report, without any threat of divorce. It makes lots of sense for both of us to master all the different skills in handling the boat and it also meant that with Gill driving the boat I would be able to work the lock mechanisms to control the water flow and to open and close the gates for her.



Here comes
Gill into
her first
lock solo



and this is me
putting my back
into it.

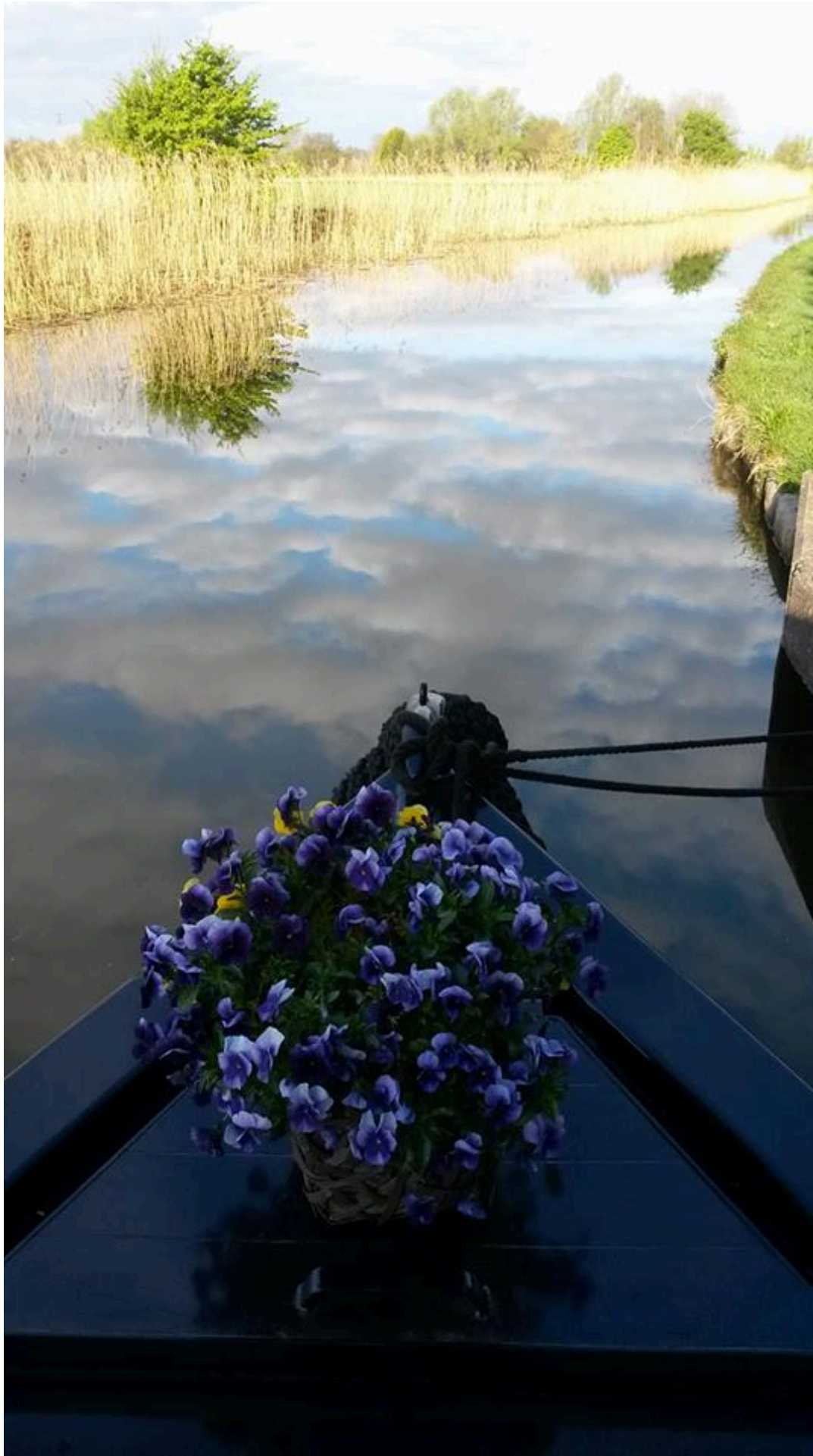
Two locks later as I heaved with all my might at another monstrously heavy balance beam and contemplated what felt like the beginnings of a blister on my hand I became aware of a terrible flaw in my strategy. As Gill proved to be more than competent in her new role I tried to put a positive slant on the situation and told myself how much fitter and stronger I would be after six months of hard physical labour.

We have been very slowly making our way west towards the big city, enjoying a sociable time with Mick and Sara who are also on their way there and from our home marina.



Tow path friends

Golden Girl has been showered with compliments and photographed so often it's like being in the company of a minor celebrity. I'm worried she will be wanting her own dressing room soon.



Golden Girl admiring herself in
the reflections

So four days, seven locks and eleven swing bridges later we find ourselves a staggering seventeen miles from where we started. We were determined to take this new adventure at a leisurely pace and so far I think we are doing quite well. A couple of people we have chatted to on the tow path have suggested that we are like a snail carrying our home with us. The main difference though is that a snail would probably be in Liverpool before us.



Passing through a swing bridge
with new found boating friends