

Friends of PRESIDENT



'195'

Winter 2008

Chairman's Report

Dear Steamers

Firstly I would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a great new year.

More of the new year shortly, but first a look back on 2008 and what a year!

After the disasters of 2007 it was a great feeling to hear that the boats were on the way down the Nene to visit the Fens and Rivers of the East. The whole visit went very well and I am sure that there will be much written about the various parts.

From my part it was great to have the boats so near to home, (only 16 miles away at one point) and to be able to go to places that no FMC steamer has been before. The welcome we got was fantastic with even the fishermen taking photos. The highlights were the evening arrival in Upwell, the banks and bridges lined with the villagers and then being invited to our evening meal at the trust vice chairman's home because the pub was not serving food. The next day we were towed by a Volvo as the bottom was very close to the top. The passage through Salters Lode and Denver stands out as well, firstly as Driver and the return as Captain (details later). I also enjoyed the visits to Prickwillow, Cambridge and Ely. Congratulations to all the crews involved and thanks to the members who attended the working parties that made it all possible.

Well on to 2009 – President will be 100 years old. From the crewing sheet and

the web site you will see that we have plans for a good year of exciting boating and special events. Please have a good look and let Richard know what you can do – be generous with you time for this very special year. The events will be kicking off with a 'party' at the Black Country Living Museum on Saturday May 2nd with activities in the evening and going on all over the bank holiday weekend so put this firmly in your diary. We would like to see as many members as possible especially on the Saturday. We will send out more details later in the New Year.

In addition to the birthday celebrations 2009 must be the year we push for new members, we have to ensure the boats future is secure, and this will only happen if we attract lots of new younger active members.

The boats are been prepared for the celebrations. 'Kildare' is currently at Dafords' Wharf where Ian Kemp is replacing the fore cabin and then a repaint. Early in the New Year we will swap the boats over and 'President' will have some running repairs and a paint job ready for May. As the year unfolds there will be a lot for us to do so again please come forward to calls for the working parties in great numbers. So again season's greetings and best wishes, looking forward seeing you in 2009.

David Powell
Chairman



CHRISTMAS DINNER a'la cut!

Roast Pheasant

*First obtain your pheasants.
Pluck and 'draw' the birds keeping the heart, livers gizzard etc for the gravy.
Wipe the birds outside and in with a damp cloth.
Pick out visible 'shot'.
Loosen the breast skin of the birds and spread butter twixt skin and meat.
Tie the legs of the bird with string and place bacon rashers across the pheasants.
Place birds in an enclosed roasting tin with a few herbs (if obtainable).
Roast for an initial 15/20 minutes in a hot oven with a good flame and a healthy fire.
Then allow the fire to relax to a medium heat for a further 45 minutes or until the birds brown and juice runs clear from a skewered thigh.
Serve with available vegetables.*

Roast Duck

*Obtain your duck
Pluck and 'draw' the bird.
Have ready an even fire and gentle oven.
Clean the bird inside and out with a damp cloth.
Pierce skin of bird with a fork and season liberally with salt and pepper.
Tie the bird's legs with string and place in a lidded roasting tin.
Roast in a gentle heat for 1 ½-2 hrs maintaining the fire temperature
Prepare vegetables.
Check the fire regularly, if too hot close damper,
if too cool, open damper and re-coal sparingly until fire has revived.
At required time, remove bird from oven and drain the fat from the tin.
Raise the fire temperature by opening the damper and adding coal. Replace duck to oven for a further 30 minutes maintaining moderate temperature as described.
If an orange is available, slice and place over breast of duck for last few minutes of roasting.*

Note;

*The feathers of game or fowl may be kept to fill a cushion or pillow.
To cleanse the feathers, place in an old pillowcase, tie with string and hang on tiller overnight in a good sharp frost.*

SEASONS GREETINGS TO ONE AND ALL

*DON'T LET THE FIRE GO OUT TO FIND
THE B****Y COAL!*

Annie.

News from the Shop

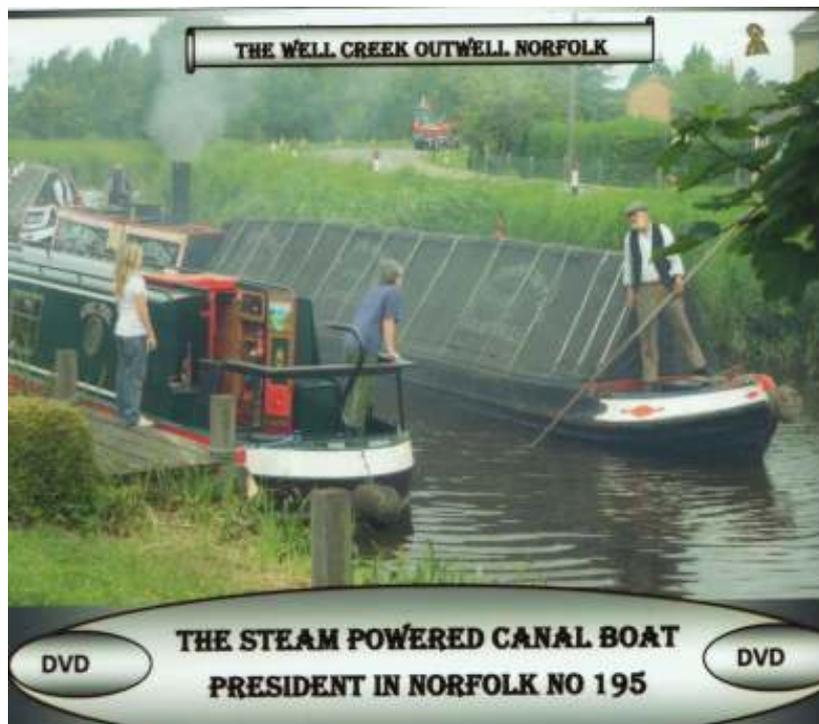
FoP shirts and neckerchiefs can now be ordered online and paid for with credit/debit cards. I have added them to my site at

<http://www.canalshop.co.uk/acatalog/friendsofpresident.html>

As long as members enter their membership number when asked during the checkout stage, then the shirts have a £5 discount. After deducting the postage and card processing fee, the remainder of the money is passed to Friends of President.

DVD covering some of this year's trip.

It covers the outward trip this year along the Well Creek, from Marmont Priory to Salters Lode locks, part of the Middle Level route from the Nene to the Great Ouse. It has a running time of approx 1 hour and has a recommended retail price of £12.50, but as a special offer to members it is available at £11.50 including P & P.



Cheques only for the DVD, (no card payments possible for this offer), made payable to Friends of President, and sent to

Neil Ratcliffe
Briar Cottage
Old Warwick Road
Lapworth
Solihull
B94 6JU

Ar Ely



Nahthen, its Ely ere. Last time I were tellin yer abaht meetin this steamboat lot fort fust time, anyroad, I ad a reet gradely time we'em an now, I'v joined em proper like, , , eee therra grand lot.

Anyroad, ere I am ont next trip ont crew, wi goin 't Braunston for th'FMC show wi a reet nice bloke as t' captain who knows 'ell of a lot bout boats but as 'abbit o' walkin off thend o't locks intut' cut! Daft I call it.

This morning, I cooked snap for breakfast, med em a reet load o bacon n' egg butties, doersteps o' bread, non o' this fancy stuff wi thedges cut off, no, , , I sez wen I werra lad wi used to live on decent butties med wi owt wi could gerrowd on, an wont too fussed bout were it come from tha knows, but by 'ell, we knew were it wer gooin.

Anyroad, we gorr'Atton art o't' way, and stopped at' bottom for a brew, I said ; ' In my day, we stopped for nowt', ad to gerr 'ed see!

But no, , , we 'ad time, so stop we did.

So, we ties up wit front end sort o' stuck art, praps level wer darn a bit, , ,she wont for comin in anyroad.

Nah, , , wi a deep boat you atta watch weer yer stop, wen I wer a lad, there wer places yer could gerra loaded boat reet intut side an that's wer yed tie up see.

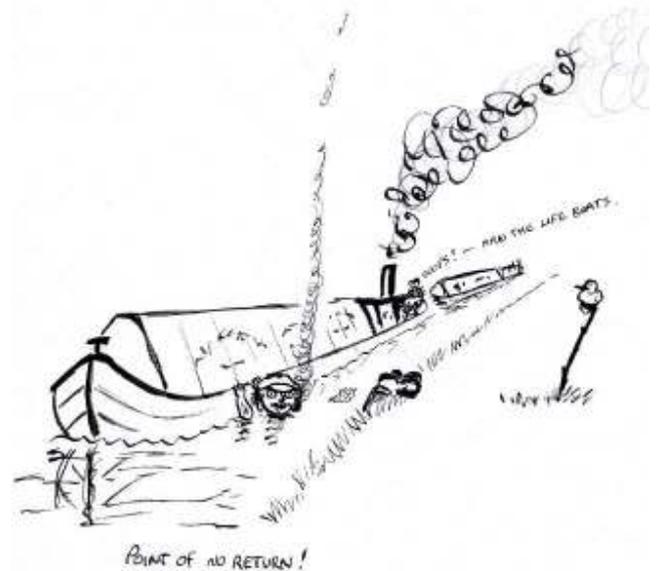
Anyroad, wid ad us snap an wer ready for off so I goes tut'front o'th boat, shoves me stick intut ground (won't go anywhere wi-art that stick tha knows, , , tharsand uses that stick 'as, , , apart from stopping me tippin up!) and readys missen to shove 'er off., I shoves, , , nowt appens, so I just lean there a bit, while they av a conflag abart it.

Anyroad, I'm there waitin an leanin, gerrin me pipe goin nicely wen a bit sudden like, boat gives an 'eav an floats off! I'm suspended there tween boat an bank as they set off, 'that'll do Ely' they shouts, that'll do! That'll do! Too reet it'll do, I'm gooin in! (can tha remember the definition of a 'spur-lash???)

In I went, feet on't bank 'ands on't boat an a ruddy wet bit in't middle.

'Ar yer allreet' thi shouts, we'll get yer art, 'Beggan that lad' I sez, 'get me stick off' bank'. . . . 'Nah me blessed pipes gon art!'

To be continued...



(Ely's views and opinions are not necessarily those of FOP or it's members)

Steaming up Quiz

Questions

- 1 What is the length of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal?
 - a 115.5 miles
 - b 134.25 miles
 - c 127.5 miles
 - d 85 miles
- 2 What is the function of the bobbins on the harness of a boat horse?
 - a Decoration
 - b Protection
 - c To add weight
 - d Buoyancy aids
- 3 Which of the following are not staircase locks
 - a Foxton Locks
 - b Hatton Locks
 - c Forge Locks
 - d Neptunes Staircase
 - e Caen Hill Locks
 - f The Bratch
- 4 What are the dimensions of the largest craft that can navigate from Manchester to Leeds via the Huddersfield Narrow and the Calder & Hebble Canals
 - a 124 ft x 21ft
 - b 71ft x 14 ft
 - c 57ft x 7ft
 - d 71ft 6 x 7ft
 - e none of the above
- 5 What is the connection between Napton Bottom Lock & F.O.P.?
- 6 What is Foulridge tunnel's claim to fame?
 - a The only broad canal tunnel operated with traffic lights
 - b Britain's highest canal tunnel
 - c A cow swam through and had to be revived with a bottle of brandy
 - d It supposedly has a resident ghost
- 7 How many piers has Pontcysyllte aqueduct got?
 - a 19
 - b 15
 - c 2
 - d 18
 - e 21
- 8 Where does the boathorse keep his frog?
 - a In his ear
 - b On his harness
 - c In his feed bag
 - d In his foot
 - e Under his tail
- 9 How many tubes does President's boiler contain?
- 10 Which part of the B.C.L.M. is original?

What's this then

Each edition will contain 2 or 3 pictures taken from an unusual angle – its your job to determine what they are. Again answers at the AGM – be there

1



2



3



4



5



6



Gallery (send your pics for inclusion in the next issue of **Steaming Up.**)



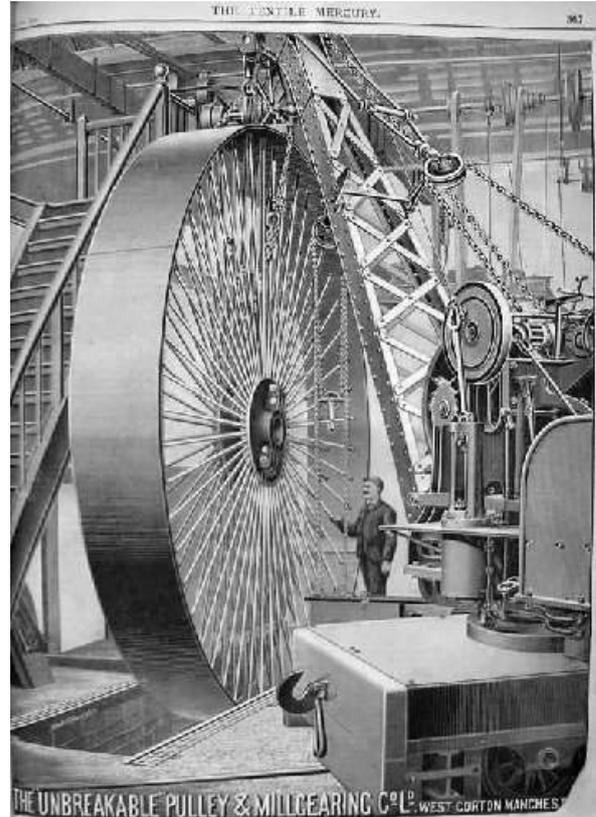
P. & K. relaxing @ Shackerstone 4. 9. 04.



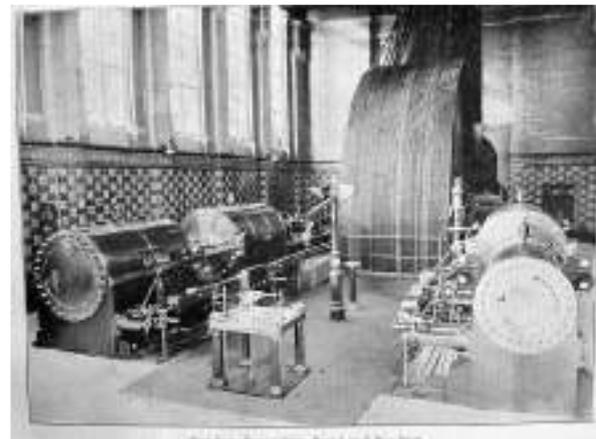
George relaxing, 4. 5. 05.



FMC invasion. Audlem. 18. 8. 05.



‘Mr. Stott... it says here that this pulley’s unbrakeable!’



‘Mr. Stott... this’ll make it go faster!’

Trip reports

Billing to Waterbeach by Neil Ratcliffe

Crew (at various times) – Neil Ratcliffe (capt), Dave Stott (driver), Dave Powell (driver), Richard Burke, Alan Claridge, Susie Empsall, Richard Prince, Martin Ludgate, Bob Crompton.

One of the jobs of the captain is the planning of the night's stops. This is usually relatively easy, especially if you have travelled the route before. Planning the stops on the River Nene was completely different, I had never been there before, moorings and pubs are a lot fewer, and to find the two together even rarer. But after many hours of looking through the guides, maps and Google Earth, I had the four stops on the Nene worked out, the stops on the Middle Level and Great Ouse were easier.

Then came the sad news that Dave Powell's mother-in-law had died and Dave would be unable to be the driver for the first four days of the trip. Dave Stott agreed to stand in but was unable to do the first day, a Sunday, because of other commitments. So the four days on the Nene had now become three, as we still had to get to Stanground Sluice for our booked passage through on the Thursday morning. Back to the guides, maps and Google Earth. Eventually a plan emerged and Monday to Wednesday's stops were worked out.

Richard B and myself travelled to Billing on the Saturday, Dave S and Alan arrived on Sunday, and Susie on Monday morning. So with the crew all

present we set off at 8 o'clock.

Travelling on the river, with the flow, and negotiating the bends was totally different to the canals, and produced one or two unplanned events, but there was a lack of other boats around, so no-one noticed – except the crew!!.

For those that are unfamiliar with River Nene locks, the top end has a pair of mitre gates and paddles, the same as a wide canal lock, but the bottom end has a guillotine gate, which, whatever way you are travelling on the river, must always be left raised when you leave the lock. The majority of the guillotine gates are electrically operated but there are still a few that are manual and require a lot of turns of a large wheel to raise and lower the gate.

As we were travelling downstream our first job at the lock was to lower the gate and fill the lock. If you were on the canal you could send a member of the crew forward, on a bike if necessary, to get the lock ready for the boat's arrival, but as there is not always a path along the river we couldn't do this. Another use for Google Earth in the planning stage was to find out which side of the river the landing stages were for each lock, because often the lock was unsighted on the approach, but at least we knew which side to aim for.

The Tesco's in Wellingborough was a necessary stopping point for provisions, and the moorings there looked to be very inviting, until we tried getting President alongside and we ran aground. Quite a lot of time was wasted here before we managed to get tied up.

The first night's stop was supposed to be on the moorings above Lower Ringstead lock, but it appeared to be all overgrown, I didn't want to risk upsetting anyone by mooring on the lock landing area, so we had to continue. There were also supposed to be more moorings along the next stretch of the river but we didn't find them either. As it was now turning into a long day, we decided to spend the night on the lock landing above Woodford Lock, tying up at 2030.

One of the advantages of the long day meant that the next one was shorter, so we didn't set off until 9am. As we were leaving Wadenhoe lock we had a message shouted at us from a passing boat, that we couldn't moor up in the weir stream above Ashton lock as planned, but we were to go on to Fotheringhay, but we didn't discover who the message was from. When we arrived at Ashton lock, there appeared to be a very suitable mooring at the start of the weir stream, so we ignored the message and moored as planned, at 1645. There followed a very nice evening in the local pub.

Wednesday was going to be a longer day again, so we set off at 0740. We passed through Fotheringhay at about 10am, nobody asked us where we were last night, so the source of the message remained a mystery, and still does. All the people around Wansford station and the Nene Valley Railway had something else to photograph as we passed by.

Tonight's stop was The Boathouse at Thorpe Meadows, just before Peterborough. It is reached by turning off the river and travelling about

a quarter of a mile to a basin opposite the pub where the Environment Agency had installed moorings. I had already contacted the pub and was told that there wouldn't be any depth problems, and there weren't. We arrived at 1805. Not long after our arrival Dave P. arrived. Dave S stayed long enough to join us in the pub for the evening meal and then travelled home.

Thursday was the day through Stanground. After stopping in Peterborough to empty the Elsan and fill up with water, we arrived at Stanground. Kildare is OK for going through this lock in the normal way, but because of the draft of President, it had to go through backwards, so that the deepest part of the boat is in the deepest part of the lock, (when the lock was lengthened, the new bit was made deeper than the original). President was turned at the entrance to the lock and brought in backwards, we still found the bottom of the lock though and there had to be a couple of flushes to get her out. The boats were then breasted up, but facing in opposite directions, and the next mile was travelled like this to the next point where President could be turned again. Easily said, but the turning took over an hour to achieve because of the lack of depth.

The next point of interest was Briggate bend in Whittlesey. We were foiled in our attempt at getting round, again by lack of depth. Various phone calls to Tina (lock keeper at Stanground), to get more water fed through to raise the level, much pushing and pulling eventually saw us successfully round the bend and under the bridge. It had used up another 3 hours !!

At the planning stage, Fox Narrowboats was going to be the night's stop because we could be loading more coal for the journey, but the loading had been done by the previous crew, but we still intended to stop at Fox's. This all changed when Dave was having problems keeping up enough steam for our journey. We had to keep stopping to enable the pressure to rise again so that we could continue. The reason for this was some very clogged boiler tubes.

More phone calls, this time to Floods Ferry Marina to see if they had space for us overnight. They had, and they even said they would keep the kitchen open for us so that we could get something to eat. We were also allowed to plug into the electric to charge our batteries.

This change to our plans also affected the picking up of the next two crew members to join, namely Richard P and Martin. Martin, who is the assistant editor of Canal Boat magazine, was joining us for 24 hours to get 'the President experience' for an article for the magazine. After more phone calls (how did we manage before mobile phones?), they were both picked up at Angle Bridge.

The first job for Friday morning was the cleaning of the tubes. As part of the 'experience' Martin agreed to help with this very dirty job. Then it was away from our moorings at 11am, stopping in March for some more shopping and heading for the night's stop at Upwell.

Martin's 'experience' continued with spells in the engine room with

Dave, and then steering the pair. He left us at Marmont Priory lock to cycle back to his car. The Well Creek Trust had obviously notified a lot of people of our trip because there were lots of them watching our progress. Lots of photos being taken, we were even being filmed by one person whilst he was driving along the road parallel to the waterway. Our arrival at the moorings in Upwell was delayed at the last bridge, when the looby on Kildare was too high to get under the bridge. When the pin was removed to allow the looby to be taken out, instead of taking it out, the looby dropped down inside the mast. Problem solved for now, but it did give a later crew something to do.

When we were supposed to be coming through Upwell on our way to the previous year's National at St Ives, it had been arranged with Dave Short of the Well Creek Trust that we would do the opening of the new stretch of moorings by Church Bridge. This was obviously cancelled when we didn't make the trip, also cancelled was the free meal in the pub, courtesy of Dave and the Trust.

Contact with Dave before this trip had resulted in the offer of a meal in the pub being repeated, but on our arrival at the moorings, Dave met us to say that the kitchen of the pub was closed for refurbishment, but the crew were welcome to join Dave and his wife, Sylvie, for a salad at their home after a drink in the pub. This offer was accepted.

After the drink, we all went to Sylvie and Dave's place, a short walk away. The sight of all the food on the table prompted me to think 'who else is

coming?'. A very pleasant evening was then spent in their company.

Saturday started with very slow progress through the rest of Upwell and Outwell, at one point we were towed by a Volvo car, and if that hadn't worked there was also a tractor unit of an artic on standby, but the Volvo achieved the job. Then on to Salters Lode where we collected a gas cylinder from an Upwell resident who had offered to get a cylinder for us the previous night. Bob Crompton & Kath also joined us here for the trip to Denver.

Talks with Paul, the lock keeper at Salters Lode, resulted in the plan for getting through the lock. 70ft boats can either lock down onto the Great Ouse or wait for a level and then go through the lock with both gates open, they cannot lock up onto the river. It was decided that Kildare would be locked through first, then President, the boats would then be breasted up and we would head for Denver.

Unfortunately, the plan didn't work. Kildare went through OK and was tied up to wait for President, which was also then locked down. On trying to exit the lock it ran aground, so we had to wait for the incoming tide to raise the level. So that President could try and stay in the centre of the channel out of the lock, Kildare had to be moved further forward, out into the tidal stream. The flow then caught the front of Kildare and sent it across the exit from the lock. The lock keeper said we would have to let Kildare go otherwise President wouldn't get out onto the river. Kildare then drifted to the bank just upstream of the lock. President was brought out onto the river too fast and then ended up

alongside Kildare but facing the wrong direction.

Rather than create a further spectacle for the people gathered at the lock, it was decided to travel to Denver the way we were, after all it had worked at Stanground. So we arrived at Denver with President providing the power, and being steered by Kildare – no problems. President then turned above Denver Sluice and we were on our way again. Bob and Kath also left us at this point for their journey back to Salters Lode and their car.

Moorings for the night were the EA moorings opposite the Black Horse at Littleport. The pub moorings were full of cruisers from a cruising club further up the Great Ouse.

Sunday, the final day, saw us setting off at 0850, turning left onto the River Lark to go to the Prickwillow Drainage Museum, where we were due to be on display for a few hours. Left here mid afternoon for the rest of the journey to the Cam Conservators depot at Waterbeach on the River Cam, where the boats would be left for a couple of days before the next crew took over.

Just a couple of points to add. The 4 page article written by Martin appeared in the September issue of Canal Boat, and the man doing the filming from his moving car and other places (Bill Smith) has subsequently put it all together onto a DVD. More details of this should appear elsewhere in 195.

**Trip from Hartford Marina,
Huntingdon to Ely and then to
Clayhithe, Thursday 17th to
Sunday 20th July.
[(Contributions from Martin
Burke, Alan Claridge, Colin
Grantham, David Powell and
Richard Thomas (editor[?]).**

Procrastination is the prerogative of princes. Not Presidents. One consequence of the unintended year's delay of the "Under the sea tour" meant that festivities originally planned were replaced by smaller events or became simple visits. On the other hand, some people will say that the Hartford to Ely trip was one big party. It would be more accurate to say that it was several big parties.

Thursday, 17th July 2008:

Richard Thomas - Captain, David Powell - Driver - along with Colin Grantham and Alan Claridge gathered in time for an evening meal at the Hartford Mill. I [Martin Burke] arrived in time for supper - my traditional cheese "butties".

Friday:

Reveille for most of the crew was not long after 7.00 am. At about [? am] *President* and *Kildare* were urged/squeezed out past the nearby houseboat into the vast expanse of the Hartford Marina and thence onto the Great Ouse. Alan and I were to do most of the tiller work, Colin did nearly all of the filler work: filling us with tea and

sandwiches. A refreshed crew is a happy crew.

The weather was unexceptionable - funny how rarely they forecast that - with only minor splatterings of any rain during the day. Houghton Lock was the first "port of call". [[The following may have already been mentioned in previous trip reports, thus superfluous - Au.] Nearly all the locks - except the manned tidal Hermitage Lock - had a guillotine gate at one end and mitre gates the other. Operation of the guillotine gates requires an Environmental Agency key. There was a small variation between some locks as regards operation and warning lights but essentially it was a push-button job plus heaving on lock beams.

These locks were not designed for craft the size and shape of - full-length - narrowboats. Some would only take the boats singly but most had a "lay-by" inside which allowed *Kildare* to squeeze in and lie [lay?] alongside *President*. The signs showing the direction of navigation are not designed to be seen: most are ridiculously small arrows.] [[The following has small value but is overdone - could be better: Au.] The Environmental Agency skillfully avoids complaints about the size [of its navigation signs] by hiding them behind bushes. This secreting away is not very skilful but does not need to be: small signs are easy to hide. The EA was clearly not looking for a challenge but is happy to leave navigators looking for a sign.]

President and *Kildare* overshot one such sign but the resulting u-turn - v-turn? - was smoothly and pleasingly executed by Alan. Not all approaches worked so well. One lock mooring was at an

approximate 45 [?] degree angle to the lock. *President* was too close to midstream and the turn for the mooring meant she headed towards the lock mooring bow-on. Caution-first steering by Martin positioned *President* alongside the moorings - if you ignore 6 or 7 foot [not feet! - Au.] of water. (But Alan had been going on about the fact that he could walk on water and some people were hoping to see a repeat performance.)

President only grounded once but it took some minutes to back her off, by which time *Kildare* was almost alongside, facing the opposite way. Further down, cruising the tidal section after Brownhill Staunch [?Earith] lock, a seal and pup were spotted resting on a riverside mudflat.

The boats reached the tidal Hermitage Lock [Earith?] just after 1 o'clock. According to published timetables the lock is not operated between 1pm and 2pm but the lock-keeper was happy to ignore that. Even so, the boats had almost reached the - angled! - lock moorings before the gates opened and the green light came on. It was not too difficult to get into the lock chamber: just a small irritation, having to "work" the boats in (separately). The Captain was able to have a few minutes chat with the lock-keeper while the boats passed through.

There were no more locks on the way to Ely but our progress was to have significant transient markers. The first was a small crowd forming on a road bridge as we approached it. The possibility of a gang of youths willing to throw stones is unfortunately a frequent

worry but then a coach could be seen parked close to the bridge: an organised party. Perhaps a school "nature" trip? The "gang", however, turned out to be much older, well-armed with cameras and greetings. A man, having the combined age of a gang of three or four youths, began running and may have vaulted a fence or two to get ahead of us and take photos[pictures?].

With much whistling and waving we passed on by. It seemed likely that they were visiting the museum of the Stretham fen pump engine immediately after bridge. This is the sole surviving steam-powered drainage engine. [Now looked after by the Stretham Engine Preservation Trust[?]].

The day's planned destination had been the locality of Stretham but the comparatively speedy down-flow from Huntingdon to Earith meant that this was passed not long after 2 pm[?]. Before then a local pub had been phoned to cancel the evening's table booking.

Much less than an hour later, approaching Pope's Corner (where we would join the River Cam), we encountered another crowd of people. Many of the men were wearing collar and tie, suggesting some formal occasion. Whatever it was, people waved to us, we waved and whistled back.

Ely Cathedral was clearly visible some 3 miles away. Soon we were going past it and our intended - but already occupied - mooring place, alongside the Jubilee Garden [name? singular? plural?]. Seeing nowhere more suitable we turned to go back, though it was not as smooth as the turn for the lock earlier in the day.

We settled for mooring just off to the side of the Jubilee Garden[s]. This was a very small distance from a very large rock that had been brought to the town by [narrow?]boat. The rock was placed there in recognition of earlier boat cargoes of stone brought to the town. These had turned the town into a city[?] once their substance was transformed into the body of the cathedral, now less than 500 yards away from us. A similar distance away on the other side of the river, and parallel to it, we could see the railway.

After a few chores and cleaning up, the crew adjourned to a nearby pub [name??] for a feed. It was not so much a hostelry as an "eatery" and the crew felt no impulse to linger after the meal. In any case, the price of a round was enough to drive people to drink.

Saturday:

President was to be in steam but static during both "working" days. Even so, wake-up time was not much before 7.30 am, with some cleaning-up before we faced the public.

An important part of the normal static day's work is encouraging members of the public to appreciate the work of both the *Black Country Living Museum* and *President's* crew and even, perhaps, to consider becoming a member of *FoP*. The sale of raffle tickets is a valuable - though not particularly popular - adjunct. I took the line that next year is *President's* one hundredth birthday and that the raffle proceeds are an essential contribution to the crew's beer fund for the centenary party. I am not sure that I convinced anyone else that there was

such a fund but it seemed to provide me an incentive and the buyers a small humorous buy-in.

During the morning, other members of the crew told me of hearing stories that a steam locomotive would be visiting Ely that day. I suspected that local people might have heard about a steam boat and had just become confused. [[*the following constitutes a large "aside"[side bar/footnote]* (I know I get confused - for instance, the time when I first encountered the *Friends of President* stall at the *Black Country Museum*, as it then was. I thought the *FoP* members were having me on. I had never heard of steam-powered narrowboats: none of the boats my crowd had hired had been like that. There were steamy relationships and much hot gas but no steam-power. I now regard this as an understandable ignorance on my part. Though it is in fact almost logical to have had such vessels, they existed for only a fraction of the time that steam railway locomotives did, passing swiftly into history. *FoP* is now committed to ensuring that that history is not simply unloaded from memory and forgotten.) [*end of aside*].

There are, of course, others who are committed to preserving and commemorating histories of various kinds. We were visited by some people with an interest in industrial archaeology: they were on a tour of a few days. And they were also the people on the bridge at the Stretham Fen Pump Museum[.]. Meanwhile someone else we had passed the day before had spotted us in Ely and made a phone call. Thus it was that a lady [lass/woman] called by to tell us that her brother used

to live - and had just died - on a narrowboat. She had come to Ely especially to express her gratitude to *President* and crew for whistling him on his way to the Pearly Lock Gates as we passed and left him in our - and his - wake. She was emphatic that he would have appreciated the salutation.

The next notable happening was the appearance of the locomotive *Kinlet Hall* [?] from the Tyseley Railway Museum, Birmingham. She steamed into Ely Station with about eight carriages of enthusiasts and passengers, many of whom were not slow to discover our mooring. One of the train stewards gave us the phone number of the "train manager". *Kildare* was moved slightly so as to give a better view of those on the train as it departed. *Kinlet Hall* [?] set off for home to the accompaniment of a vigorous whistling competition between the two beasts of burden and steam, while train passengers and boat crew[s] did a spirited re-enactment of *The Railway Children*. Quite daft, even absurd, but a little bit of fun. And from some angles it made quite a good picture ... did anybody take a photograph?

By the end of the day, we had made our presence felt, sold raffle tickets, given out membership packs. The work had not been enough to instill a deep, lingering thirst, so it was decided to eat in that night. It was cheaper and the Driver just could not haul himself away from commanding flames somewhere - furnace, cooker, anywhere.

Sunday:

Start time on Sunday was much the same as Saturday but the riverside was much

quieter. The Hermitage lock-keeper and friend turned up for a more relaxed view of the boats.

One passer-by was a teacher: there was a brief discussion on several subjects - the teaching of mathematics, the uses of twittering, ... (For those who do not know about it, "twittering" is a service via the WWW which enables users to place small "public" messages about where they are, what they are doing, etc.) *[[the following constitutes a large "aside"/side bar/footnote]* The first impression for most sensible people is that this is a rather grotesque idea: all about ego, self-publicising, self-importance, etc. For many this would be true but for *President* [- herself a publicity tool of the BCLM -] this could be a valuable aid. Schools and other organisations could keep tabs on *President's* progress, arrange for meetings en route, even use the system to have *President* carry - small, symbolic - cargoes between them. (At the same time children could more actively learn about geography, along with use of *Google Earth* and "mashups" - which might be described as "tailoring" the information on maps or elsewhere.)]

We were planning to set off for the Waterbeach/Clayhithe secure moorings at about 2.00 pm. Before then, one of the previous day's best customers turned up as arranged - though with another friend who had not been "arranged" - to help crew the boats and obtain an idea of what was involved. This was David - with an interest in old Pashley bicycles and such - and Sue.

There were no locks to be negotiated. Occasional side winds required a notable

amount of tacking. To make it more interesting, Alan, steering *President*, decided to show David - trying his hand with *Kildare's* helm - how important a butty can be to its motor. So he popped into the back cabin to find the canal guide. Turning to pop back up again, he discovered that he had been grabbed by the gremlins and could not get out of the cabin. A step back to wrong foot the gremlins failed completely and they tightened their grasp. But with might and main he struggled forward and broke free, leaving the gremlins with only a little scrap or two of his waistcoat as a trophy. By this time *President* was aiming to go overland but David[?], under Richard Thomas's tutelage was able to bend *President* away.

In summary, it seems on the whole to have been a successful weekend. Distributing *President* and *Black Country Living Museum* "flyers" is now an integral part of this fly-boat crew's work. There was a reasonable acceptance of these and the "beer fund" incentive may have helped raffle ticket sales. Some of the "success" was quite unexpected. *President's* whistle was originally meant to be used to signal maneuvering intentions but now is more frequently "Hail and farewell".

We hailed a crowd of industrial archaeologists and a crowd of steam train/railway enthusiasts. We bid *fare ye well* to someone we did not see, someone who had reached the "end of navigation". Members of *FoP* steam through life, doing their little bit to help humanity know where it has come from and how it has done so. Knowing where we are going is a different matter. There comes a time when we will all lock up - or down? - permanently, having reached

the end of our own navigation. Somewhat ironically, *President* should get closer to immortality than any of us. *FoP* will play a part in ensuring that *President* will continue her navigation on the canals: a "cut" into the future that will outlast us all. For we mere mortals it will, one day, be RIP - *President* may never rust in peace.

Editors note

Firstly The Committee wish all members past & present, old and new a very merry Belated Christmas and a Happy and steamy new year

Secondly an apology from me for failing to produce an autumn Steaming up and the late issue of this edition of 195 – However as some of you know I am experiencing major difficulties with both my parents which is ongoing and becoming more demanding by the day.

Thirdly I really do need some input from you the members – thanks to those who have contributed – it doesn't matter what it is . If you feel like sharing anything then just send it to me

Dave Speer

30 Salteye Road Peel Green
Eccles Manchester M30 7PJ

nutdip@ntlworld.com
nutdip@googlemail.com

Secretary's additions

Sorry for the delay in getting communications out during 2008.

Too few people doing too much work in limited time.

Plan to make 2009 better.

One of the things you could do to make my job easier would be to set up an annual Standing Order to pay your subs. Please think about it and either download from the website or let me know and I will send you one.

2009 Crewing

You will find enclosed the Crewing Programme for 2009.

Please indicate those journeys for which you would like to be considered and return to either Richard Thomas or myself.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as we can on Saturday 2nd May.

Nick Haynes

42, Tredington Close
Redditch, Worcs
B98 7UR

Nick_Haynes@uk.ibm.com