

TREASURES AWAITING ALL: A JOURNEY ALONG THE LOUTH CANAL

My boat is 10.5ft long and is a Dagger Katana Action which is a cross-over between recreational, touring and white-water styles and, strictly speaking, should be referred to as a Kayak and not a canoe I bought this new from a place called Wet & Wild in Hull. I chose the canal as it is the closest fresh water to where I live in Cleethorpes and because it holds fond memories of many childhood hours spent fishing there.

I parked my car in Tetney Lock by the side of the weir in Newton Marsh Lane and after unloading it and changing into my rather fetching clothing (shortie wetsuit, personal floatation device (PFD – that'll be a lifejacket)) and spray deck (looks like a ladies skirt designed by Vivienne Westward but is fitted around my waist and the boat cockpit to stop the lower half of the body getting wet) I put the boat on my shoulder, passed the paddle from my foot to my hand and made my way to the bank above the weir.

By the side of the canal I was able to slide the boat down the grassy bank to an area that looked like a fishing spot and rest the boat in the shallow water. Now came the tricky bit, entering the boat. I found putting the rear on the bank stabilized things and I was able to climb aboard, get comfy, fit my spray-deck and shuffle onto the water with a small degree of competence.

After a little time spent wobbling around near the weir I set off upstream passing the Crown and Anchor pub and a little further on the statuesque figure of a Heron. The weather was breezy but the sun managed to force its way out from behind the passing clouds and in parts the canal fell silent and calm with only the gentle plop of paddle entering water propelling me onward. Mind you at other times it was a tad more challenging as I turned head to wind and the path of true kayaking did not run smooth.



Eventually I spied the Thoresby Bridge target I had set myself for this first trip and passed underneath before returning and parking myself to one side to sit back and admire the old Navigation Warehouse.



For my return journey the breeze that had taunted my outward voyage encouraged my return such that I was able to glide along almost effortlessly. This silent running meant I must have surprised a few fish as I saw several jump or, where the surface was calm, dart away beneath me. About half way back I caught sight of the distinctive bright blue almost metallic flash of a Kingfisher and stopped to try to get a better view. It maintained a discrete distance from me until I lost sight of it after ten minutes or so.

Back at Tetney Lock I approached two anglers and had to excuse myself as I passed by. They both waved and offered a friendly “good-morning” which is in great contrast to my experience of driving a car on Britain’s congested highways.

On my return to the bankside I tried various ways to make exiting my boat safe and elegant. In the end I managed safe but my bum out scabble back onto dry land was certainly not elegant

After pushing the boat back up the bank and returning to my car I got dried and changed and drove the short distance to the Crown and Anchor. I sat on a bench outside and over a pie and chips with a lager shandy sat reflecting on a most enjoyable first canal experience during which I think I paddled about four miles (two miles each way?).



James Rendall
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