

## Water, water everywhere

It was to be the last day we would have on the boat that year. The plan had been just to tidy up, cover up and take home the tender/sailing dinghy's outboard.

Making plans and keeping to them has never been our strong point. That November day, the weather had been perfect for a short run up the River Bure from our moorings at Horning; we couldn't resist, could we?

We dropped our mudweight at Salhouse Broad for a picnic lunch and stayed much longer than intended; I did mention it was a lovely day, didn't I? We cruised back with mixed feelings; happy to have managed another day out on the river, but sad that we are not coming back till next year. On the way back we reminisced about when we first bought Red Dwarf. It didn't have any heating and we stayed on it for five days over the New Year, with our youngest son sleeping under the canvas canopy at the rear. Many of the Broads were frozen over, so we could only use the rivers.

Upon returning to our moorings it was getting pretty dark and cold. Still, we only had to pick up a rowing boat, cover up Red Dwarf, take off Starbug's outboard, upturn her onto the grass and row back across the river. Then it was just a walk up the hill to the village car park, with bedding, outboard and buoyancy aids. Then we would be ready for the drive back home.

Feeling very satisfied with ourselves, although cold and hungry, a good idea came to us. Stop at Potter Heigham, get fish and chips and eat them in the car at the parking spot by the dyke opposite.

They were delicious; so with our hunger satisfied, having accomplished what we had set out to do and having had a grand day to boot I didn't want it to end there.

I said, "I'll go and discard the chip wrappers in the bin."

"No," he said. "Take them home with us."

"Can't do that, they will make the car smell! I won't be a jiffy."

**That's** when the day started to fall apart. Instead of finding the bin near the Chip Shop, I went to the boat rubbish disposal compound on the other side of the dyke.

I got out of the car, walked round the end of the dyke and observed the rubbish compound had got a smart new gated fence around it. I opened the gate and popped in our rubbish, turned and walked out of the gate, clicking it shut behind me. I was just having a pleasant little think to myself as I walked back. The day had been grand, fish and chips a bonus and even the rubbish had been a pleasure to throw away when I put my foot into a puddle. Well, I thought, it must be a large puddle as both feet were saturated. Then I felt my face chilly and wet. Oops, I think I made a mistake there because when I bobbed up I was a third of the way across the dyke. I had quite a struggle to get back to the bank; it was too high for me with my heavy winter clothes and shoes to climb out of. I curled my right elbow over the bank and started to inch my way round the dyke; when I got to the other side I would be able shout to attract the attention of my waiting husband.

My movement started to get a little easier as I got nearer to the head of the dyke, there was a slipway into the water. I was able to walk up the slipway and out of the dyke. Shivering with cold I headed towards the car, Hubby spotted me coming, seeing something was

wrong he got out. Trembling I garbled an explanation. Thinking quickly he said, "You need to get out of those clothes, but I'm sure you don't want to do it here with all the cars coming over the bridge and the customers coming out of the Chippy."

He started the car and headed up the main road and down a quiet road to a hard standing on the edge of a field. The engine was still running, the heating up to full and my husband was helping me take off all my clothes. Then the traffic started coming down the previously quiet road. We didn't care though, the windows were misted up by then and we were married, so that made everything alright.

I sat there naked but starting to thaw out. "Better get you covered up with something," he said. "I have an idea." He ran to the boot with my wet clothes and shoes and came back with an old tablecloth. "Wrap that round yourself, nobody will notice your lack clothes."

We made the journey to Colchester with haste. The front door was on one side of the house, the drive on the other. I was pleased that nobody was out dog walking that night as I walked across the front of the house and I got indoors without being seen. I even managed to get up the stairs without the boys who were still living at home seeing me come in.

I then had the longest shower I have ever had.

I realised that I had got away something, but always made a joke about it. You have got to have a good story to tell, haven't you?

It really hit home to me one day when I found this on the Internet.

# The Broads: Inquest Verdict into Bridge Pilots Death Announced

Posted on April 25, 2012



An inquest into the death of popular Potter Heigham bridge pilot, Graham Cook, has recorded that Mr Cook died as a result of accidental.

After failing to turn up for work, his friend and work colleague Paul Tenant went to rouse him from his boat and found him in a dyke close to the river.

“I just saw the back of Graham’s jacket, which was full up of air and he was lying face down in the water. He was encircled in ice,” said Mr Tenant.

Fear overtook me when I read it; that was the exact spot I walked into the water. I realised then what a near death experience I’d had and in my husband’s words: “For the sake of being tidy minded, you could have been found dead like that”.