

## RIVER WEAVER CRUISE – 29 APRIL 2023

The weather forecast for 29 April 2023 was for sunshine and showers, but fortunately for the 25 members of DevaMog who signed up for a cruise down the River Weaver on the historic 1903 steamship Danny, the sunshine prevailed!

The day started at the iconic Anderton Boat Lift where our Centre Secretary, John Smith, had organised private parking and no sooner had we parked up a steady stream of onlookers came past admiring the line-up of cars. After explaining numerous times that the Morgan chassis is not made of 'wood' we made our way up into the Visitor Centre for much needed refreshments.

As the Centre Café overlooks the lift, often referred to as the 'Cathedral of the Canals', we had a good view of this 150 year old unique structure. The lift had undergone some major repairs over the winter and had only recently reopened, which is just as well as it carries around 3000 boats each year between the Trent and Mersey Canal and the River Weaver.



At the prearranged time we boarded our coach for the short transfer to the Sutton Weaver Swing Bridge where the Danny was waiting for us. Our steward, Dick, gave an informative running commentary on various aspects of the Danny and I was interested to learn that since the war in Ukraine Russian coal is no longer available, so it now comes from Columbia, but at four times the cost!

Upon our arrival at the Sutton Weaver Swing Bridge, we were greeted by the beautifully restored and fully working steam powered tug the Daniel Adamson, known simply as the Danny. We were greeted on board by the extremely



friendly volunteer crew and quickly found our seats in readiness for our cruise. There was a choice of seating, you could opt for one of the opulent art deco saloons, sit in the covered forward observation deck or secure a spot out on the open deck where your senses were treated to the thrill of steam (you were also closer to the galley and bar!) A slight technical hitch delayed our departure by a few minutes but an engineer with a big spanner and a large hammer quickly coaxed the ancient machinery back into life! At the helm was DevaMog member, Captain Graham Jackson, and his wife Lynne, along with other volunteers, staffed the galley and kept us fed and watered throughout the trip.

Once underway the Danny cruised effortlessly through the Cheshire countryside, and I was amazed how quiet and smooth a steam powered ship is when compared to modern diesel powered vessels. The atmosphere on board was convivial and there was the sound of constant chatter and laughter throughout the cruise. One of the highlights for me was the opportunity to join Graham on the Bridge where he explained the workings of the steam powered steering system, which in laymen's terms means large cylinders, pistons and chains! From the Bridge you had a commanding view of the river, and you began to appreciate the skill required to steer such a large ship through a narrow stretch of water, particularly when traversing the locks or being confronted by paddle boarders!





It was a cruise of contrasts, a mix of beautiful rural countryside and industrial heritage, interspersed with the most amazing wildlife which meant ample photo opportunities for everyone on board. The rural tranquillity was only broken by the sound of the Danny's steam whistle. From the moment you stepped on board you felt relaxed and the crew couldn't have been more welcoming, their enthusiasm for the boat was matched by their friendliness and approachability. Two other interesting facts that I learnt was it takes one ton of coal to get up a full head of steam from cold and the boilers consumed approximately two tons of coal on our cruise.



Before we knew it, the Anderton Boat Lift came into view and our four hour cruise was quickly nearing its end. However, before docking we were treated to an exciting finale. Just as the Danny was manoeuvring to come alongside, and only a few feet off the quayside, a

narrowboat owner recklessly decided he wanted a closer inspection of the Danny's hull and drove his boat at full speed between the quayside and the approaching ship! Fortunately, the narrowboat managed to pass through the narrow gap without incident and the shoreside crew made their views known to the owner of the narrowboat! With the excitement over, we disembarked and made our way back to our cars and then home.

To cruise for a few hours along the beautiful River Weaver on a 1903 built steamship is a unique and memorable experience and one which we will never forget. Our thanks go to Graham, Lynne and the amazing crew of the Daniel Adamson.

Joe Cleary

