

Savanna and Guildford Crusader
at Farncombe Boat House lock



Penny Parkin describes a trip along a
stretch of 'London's lost route to the sea'



There are many tales
surrounding the history of
St Catherine's Chapel.

A once vital link

– The Godalming Navigation

THE Godalming Navigation was opened in 1764 and as part of 'The Wey Navigations' to extend the Guildford Navigation 7km upstream to Godalming. It is arguably this stretch of river's most picturesque section with many moorings for a first night stay before tackling the Guildford Navigation en route to the Thames. Farncombe Boathouse has a myriad of bygone craft including punts and rowing boats and offers excellent supermarket facilities, which are a 10-minute walk away in Godalming town.

Godalming Wharf is good starting point along the navigation and hosts the Packetboat Company's horse-drawn boat lina whose knowledgeable crew readily transport visitors to a bygone era. Lina – a Victorian-era barge of the type used to transport heavy goods such as timber, coal, corn and flour to London – still draws a crowd and can seat up to 48 passengers. The journey takes in both river and canal and travels to Unstead Weir past Catteshall lock where Farncombe Boat House is based.

The Lambs Lands that run between the river Wey and Hells Ditch just north of Godalming town centre are well worth a look along this stretch with golden, wild flower strewn water meadows as you reach the Boathouse. Further upstream, The Lestern Bottle in Farncombe and The Manor Inn at Unstead are both close by the river, but if you're heading from Godalming on an empty stomach I'd recommend the Bel and The Dragon, a five-minute walk from Godalming Wharf or The Withies Inn on Withies Lane towards Compton. The latter is, however, a complicated find only to be attempted with reliable directions.

Once you've cleared Farncombe Boathouse, Unstead Lock makes a good stopping point to prepare for low-lying Broadford Bridge. It's a good idea to make sure you don't have anything on the roof and that passengers are seated on the deck or inside the boat. The Old Gunpowder Store immediately to your right following the lock, used to store gunpowder produced by the nearby Chilworth

gunpowder works, one of the Government's chief gunpowder suppliers, which closed down after WWI. Stonebridge Wharf in Shalford connects the now disused Wey and Arun canal with the River Wey. Opened in 1836, the 23-mile stretch linked the Wey to the Arun, making it possible in the 19th century to travel by boat from London to Littlehampton on the south coast and the English Channel. Despite the waterway's heavy cargo traffic, which reached 23,000 tons at the waterway's peak in 1839, the railway link between Horsham and Guildford opened in 1865 proved too strong a source of competition and the waterway closed in 1871.

As you continue under Broadford Bridge, you'll pass Shalford Mill an early-18th century watermill, which straddles Tillingbourne stream. The mill still houses much of its machinery and the mill stream and sluices remain in their original positions and provide access to all floors. If you take a guided tour, the mill guides will tell you the secret of the 'Ferguson gang', a group of anonymous benefactors who donated the mill to the National Trust in 1932.

Further upstream, just beyond St Catherine's lock, is St Catherine's Chapel – another curious gem that has proved the subject for much conjecture. Now a ruin, the Chapel sits atop a steep slope of golden

sand. It is said to have been a chapel of ease used by pilgrims travelling from Winchester to Canterbury between 1329 and 1450. A fair was held annually at the chapel until WWI and was captured by Turner in a painting, which now hangs in the Tate Britain.

A more romantic tale stems from Arthurian legend and has it that the daughter of a local lord fell in love with Lancelot when he travelled through Astolat (as Guildford was previously known). Nursing him back to health after a jousting tournament she was dismayed to find that her love was unrequited as Lancelot was in love with Guinevere. She died heartbroken upon his return to Westminster and the chapel was built in honour of 'The Maid of Astolat'.

If you can find a mooring just beyond St Catherine's, take the path beside the small 'troll bridge' leading over a stream, past several picturesque cottages and over the main line railway bridge, you'll see Guildford College of Law. The chapel is to your left over a small hill riddled with rabbit warrens and The Ship Inn is to your right. The Ship is the best pub along this route and although untraditional, its stone-fired pizzas are a must.

The Godalming Navigation ends at Millmead where the Guildford Navigation links it to the Thames. It's a stretch of river close to my heart and even if you don't visit by narrowboat, it's well worth hiring a boat for the day from Farncombe Boathouse, taking the horse-drawn boat ride from Godalming Wharf or simply walking the towpath between Guildford and Godalming. Although short, the navigation is one most visitors would be sorry to miss.



Lina horse-drawn
packetboat at
Godalming Wharf.

The Packetboat Company is a separate entity from Farncombe Boathouse and operates its horse-drawn boat trips from Godalming Wharf to Unstead Lock and back again. Contact details for both companies are as follows:

Farncombe Boathouse
Catteshall Lock, Godalming,
Surrey, GU7 1NH
Telephone: +44 (0)1483 421 306
Web: www.farncombeboats.co.uk

Godalming Packetboat Company
57 Furze Lane, Farncombe,
Godalming, Surrey, GU7 3NF
Telephone: +44 (0)1483 414938
Web: www.horseboat.org.uk

Tending your fender

IN this article, we will look at the fitting, care and maintenance of boat fenders. While they must, to a degree, be regarded as 'consumable stores' their life can be prolonged with care.

The principal types of fender in normal use are buttons, mini or long buttons, tipcats, 'Y' bows and round bows. Whatever the type of fender used, proper initial fitting is critical. The 'first and greatest' rule with fenders is that all securings must be tight!



Boat set – maxi
and standard for
the stern, standard
button for the bow.

It is not possible to describe the fitting of all fender configurations but the following practices, should, with thought, be applicable to all. Let us assume that it is desired to fit a new set of fenders as illustrated; that is, a maxi-button and standard button on the stern and a standard button on the bow.

We start with the bow-button, first, having removed the old fender.

(Handy hint! If the fender is of no further use cut off the chains – they may come in useful) then hang the fender in the desired position by the top chains. There are two usual methods of tightening the side chains; by a straining screw either as illustrated or by means of lashings. Assuming that we are using screws, fit the screws to the rings on the hull by shackles and then to both sides of the fender. The screws at this point should be at the fully open position and should be shackled into the side chains as far forward as possible. Begin to tighten, keeping the strain equal on both sides. When the desired tension has been achieved, adjust the top chains if required.

It may well be worth checking the tension regularly until the fender has 'taken up'. After a few locks have been worked it may be necessary to refit the fender to move the shackle point on the side chains further out.

Chas Baird offers some
practical tips for the fitting and
maintenance of fenders

The hardware!
Shackles and
rigging screws.



Turning to the stern, again, remove the old fender and carry on with the maxi-button as before. When this has been solidly mounted, position the stern button by means of the top chains. Probably the most efficient method of tightening this one is to use a shackle/screw rig back to the side chains of the maxi. Again, monitor the set of the fenders and adjust as required.

Some ideas on general care and maintenance of your fenders

- A pad between fender and hull may reduce abrasion; a rubber shield on the outside will do likewise.
- Turn the stern button round once a season; this will equalise wear and prolong its life.
- If your fenders are covered with natural fibre rope then coating them with an appropriate preserver will help longevity; the use of creosote is discouraged as in heavy rain all sorts of nasties will leech into the rot – use an eco-friendly substitute.
- If the boat is laid up and not used at all during the winter, it may be worth removing the fenders for storage ashore; especially with natural fibre – why give the winter mud, snow and frost a free hand? Old tyres free and left may not look good but provide an efficient substitute.
- When fitting fenders the use of eye-to-eye straining screws and shackles is normally best; screws fitted with hooks may not fit the chain and those fitted with pins and split rings are very fiddly.
- To prevent the danger of hanging-up at jamming-under in locks it may be a good idea to introduce a 'weakest link'. This can be done by carefully cutting partially through a link of chain or a shackle with a backaxe.