

ASTER 2 day report

Departed St Leger de Vignes 11.00 am Saturday 31st May.

TV3, a number of journalists and a crowd of approximately 100 people saw Aster begin her last journey.

We passed through Decize where more people waved us on our way and we ascended the lock taking us on to the Canal Lateral a La Loire to begin the journey south.

Throughout day one the engine stalled 10 times – sometimes when entering a lock, meaning we had to slow and stop Aster by the forward ropes. Sometimes it took a few minutes to re-start the engine because we had to re-charge the compressed air cylinder.

A major problem emerged when the gearbox / drive plate overheated and, despite motoring slowly for a period, we had to stop. We feared the problem may be really serious which would have resulted in a major repair and a delayed journey. Fortunately the problem was located and we were able to continue.

Despite all the problems we made approximately 26 kilometres and did 9 locks on a truncated first day. That first night we stayed at Rosiere, Ecluse 10.

The second day was much smoother. The engine stalled twice but not in difficult situations. It has taken the 'Admiral', Charles Gerard, and his crew some time to figure out the vagaries of the old engine and gearbox.

Thankfully there are experienced people on board, both mechanically and from a boat handling perspective.

The second night (1st June) we stayed at a petite Halte Nautique at Molinet, near Digoin having travelled a very respectable 37 kilometres including 9 locks.

We have received much good will en route, many people waving, hooting horns and chatting at locks. The weather has been warm and sunny and the crew, apart from a few minor injuries, are fit and well.

Today (Monday, June 2nd) we intend to travel to Genelard via Digoin.