

THE IWA GUIDE TO THE DENVER CROSSING

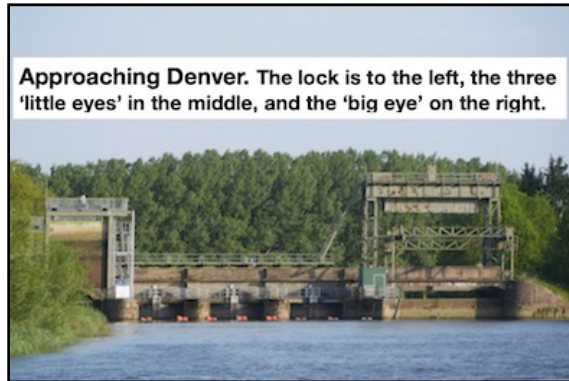


What is the 'crossing' ?

Like most rivers the Great Ouse flows into the sea. The main boundary between the non tidal river and estuary is at Denver Sluice.

The Middle Level is a series of mostly drainage channels, dug by man. To get from the non tidal waters of the River Great Ouse to the Middle Level requires a short estuary crossing between Denver and Salter's Lode. This is a guide to that crossing.

Tidal or estuary crossings demand a boater's full attention. On a balmy summer's day the conditions may be little different from the 'normal' river, but as soon as there is a bit of wind, or the flow increases after rain it becomes more demanding.



When you can cross

Both locks are operated by lock keepers and **cannot be self-operated** !

You can't simply 'pitch up and go'. Crossings are at specific times on different days.

Generally there is one window of opportunity to cross, on most, **but not all** days of the year.

You must consult with the lock keeper in advance.

Crossings are generally made at either high tide on 'springs' or either high or low tides on 'neaps'.

There is a height restriction immediately before the entrance to Salter's Lode lock and the lock keeper at Denver may let you

out approximately one hour outside of high tide (on a 'spring') so you can fit into Salter's under the beam.

Lock Keepers

When wishing to cross from the Middle Level at Salter's Lode to the River Great Ouse at Denver call **Paul at Salter's Lode on 01366 382292** to find out when the next crossing window is.

In the reverse direction, travelling from the Great Ouse at Denver to Salter's Lode call the Denver lock keepers, **Dan or Ben on 01366 382013 or 01366 382340** to find out when you can cross.

Lock keepers should always be treated with courtesy, and their advice sought and heeded. Remember - **while you're crossing, they're your best friend** !



Lock keepers, Paul, Ben + Dan (left to right)

What is a 'neap tide' or a 'spring tide' ?

The tidal cycle is over a 14 day period (in line with the phases of the moon).

'Spring tides' form the highest high tides and lowest low tides. The flow between these extremes is at its fastest at any point in the tide cycle. They happen twice a month, all year round (not just in Spring)

'Neap tides' are the lowest high tides and the highest low tides. The flow between these extremes is at its slowest at any point in the tide cycle

The Denver Sand Bar

Periodically a sand bar forms across the front of Denver Sluice. This is caused by sea water washing in and meeting fresh water flowing out. The E.A. periodically remove this. They used to dredge it once a year, but the frequency has increased to four times a year !

At its worst the sand bar can prevent passage during 'neap' tides - and there is only sufficient water at 'spring' high tides. The number of times you can cross in any month is reduced.





Two boats run aground on the sand bar at Denver

Sometimes passage can be made around the sand bar by turning sharp left as you leave Denver Lock, travelling across the face of the 'little eyes' and turning downstream (**right**) into the New Bedford River as you pass the 'big eye'. A strong body with a boat pole in the bows is a 'must' to keep you from being blown onto the sand bar. If you get it wrong you run the risk of beaching and waiting one tidal cycle before you re-float !

Anchors

It is recommended that you keep an anchor easily ready to deploy on all rivers. They are a **must for all tidal rivers** ! Never forget that an anchor buried at the bottom of a locker is useless

as you can't instantly deploy it in an emergency !

The Great Ouse has the second most extreme tidal range in the UK. It drops extremely fast. If your engine or transmission fail, without an anchor, you are likely to be swept, out of control downstream, spinning when you hit sandbanks, running the real risk of 'broad-siding' bridge stanchions until you reach King's Lynn and the sea !

Life Jackets

Should be worn by all crew members (and all pets onboard) for all tidal waters. Pets and young children should remain in the cabin.

Buoyancy aides should be regularly inspected and serviced.

Life Jackets are worn by all river pilots , all coastguards and all RNLI crews. There is nothing 'sissy' about wearing one, in fact its plain stupid not to !

Fuel

The strong recommendation is to have your tank as full as possible. If your tank is low the sometimes rough waters may stir up sediment and cause your engine to fail.

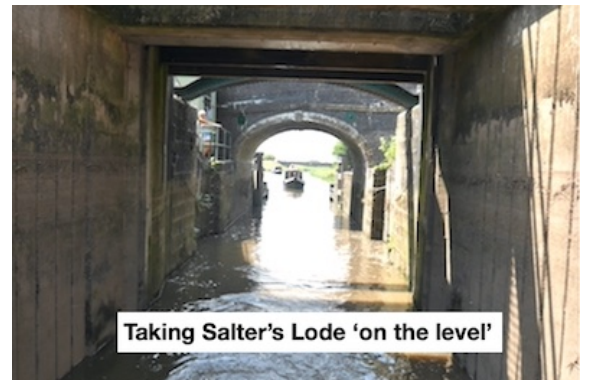
Similarly, you will be using fuel at a quicker rate than normal usage, so have plenty !

Remember if your fuel filter blocks, or you run out of fuel, there is no-one there to rescue you ! As it was starkly put to me:- *"be ready to call 999 and ask for the coastguard as you get swept past King's Lynn and out to sea !"*

Lock sizes

Salter's Lode Lock can accommodate boats to a maximum size of 18.9m x 3.81m Longer boats are taken through 'at the level' with the gates at either end both open. This can only be done in certain tide conditions. Discuss your boat's length with the lock keepers

Denver Lock is much more generous, accommodating boats up to 26.8m x 5.49m (mind you any one boat that large wouldn't get through any locks further upstream !)



Taking Salter's Lode 'on the level'

Leaving Denver Lock

- **don't** turn left and go up the New Bedford River
- do **give a wide berth** to the floating pontoon
- do remember to **turn left** into Salter's Lode Lock (otherwise next stop is King's Lynn and the sea !)

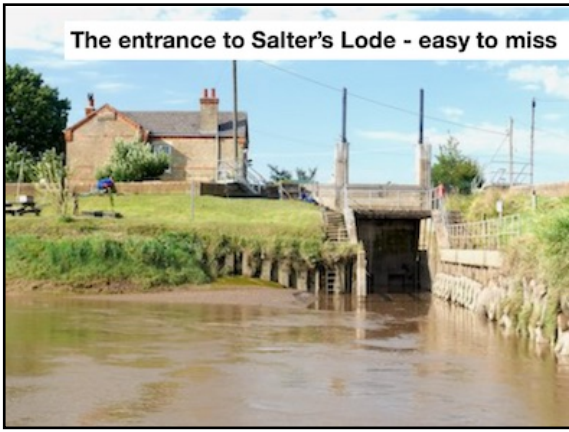


Leaving Salter's, with the tyre wall on your left

Leaving Salter's Lode Lock

- **don't** turn left and go down to King's Lynn
- travel on the **port** (left) side of the river, main stream is to the other side
- **give a wide berth** to the floating pontoon
- remember to **turn left** into Denver Lock. Don't go to the right up the New Bedford River (hire boats are prohibited)
- boats are sometimes let through 'on the level' with both gates open at the same time. boats over 18.9metres (62foot) can only

go through on the level.



The entrance to Salter's Lode - easy to miss

Arriving at Salter's Lode Lock

- The lock keeper will have been alerted by his colleague at Denver of your impending arrival and will be expecting you.
- enter the lock approach pointing in line with the lock,
- don't try and cut the corner
- on high 'spring' tides you may not be able to fit under the lintel in front of the lock and it may be necessary to wait on the tyre wall for



Waiting for the level to drop to fit into Salter's

the tide to drop sufficiently.

Arriving at Denver Lock

The lock keeper will be expecting you, so there is no need to stop at the floating pontoon and warn him that you are coming.

The approach to Denver is much more generous than that to Salter's. You should be able to go in as soon as the guillotine gate is up and the lock keeper waves you in.



The new tidal mooring at Denver

Denver floating pontoon

The E.A. have constructed a floating pontoon on the east bank of the river between Denver and Salter's Lode. It is for boats coming up from the Wash to moor up to and alert the Denver lock keeper of their presence. Anyone crossing between Denver and Salter's Lode shouldn't need to use it.

It should be given a generous berth when travelling in either direction. It is important to remember that a slight tiller adjustment on a tidal river may have less effect on the direction of the boat than on calmer waters, so make bold positive adjustments to keep well away from it !

Further information both on the crossing, and neighbouring navigable waters

can be found online at <https://goba.org.uk> or if you prefer maps in books, Imray publish guides:-

