

Logs: Solent Mini Cruise by Steve Evatt

For this September event, with sunshine, fair if fickle winds and big tides promised for the week, Shrimpers from as far afield as Keyhaven and Bosham converged on our first port of call, Shepards Wharf Marina in Cowes. For most it was an easy passage, but for the four Chichester boats it was a 15-mile journey from the harbour mouth. With little or no wind for much of the time, it was a particularly impressive feat of endurance for single-handed sailor Ian Haussauer in *Guillemette* (554). Julia Slatter and Mike Hunter in *Birdsong* (1092) anchored in Osborne Bay, and Mike went for a swim to free his mooring line from the propeller, not realising that someone else had beaten him to it in Chichester Harbour.

Years of experience of joining in with Shrimper events in our Cornish Yawl *Nellie B* had taught us that the fleet sails on its stomach, so when all 12 boats had arrived, we prepared to head to the Island Sailing Club for dinner - but not before the customary visits to each other's Shrimpers to exchange ideas on interior layouts and decor, and perhaps to sample their wine cellars. We were delighted to welcome some new faces, and as we all tucked into a superb curry there seemed to be nothing quite like passing the pappadums, naans and sauces around the table to break the ice. Very soon the noise level was up to normal Shrimper standards, and we were relieved that the club had only opened the restaurant for us!



Alongside at Cowes

Tide-bound in Cowes until lunchtime on a warm and sunny Tuesday, most of us cruised up the Medina to a lively Newport for coffee. Then we were off down the West Solent to Lymington, and with 4 knots of tide underneath us, we all made good time. The view across the Lymington River from the Dan Bran pontoon was at its breathtaking best and, after sorting out our lines to prepare for the effects of the strong tides, we headed towards one of our regular cruise venues, the Royal Lymington Yacht Club, for drinks on the balcony and, as always, an excellent dinner. Afterwards, our way along the pontoon was lit by a full moon and its shimmering reflection across the water.

Two boats, Robin Wearn's *La Mouette* (379) and Chris and Jane Willard's *Magic* (952), had anchored in Newtown Creek for the night - it must have been a wonderful sight for them too.



Alongside the *Dan Bran*, Lyminster



Dawn in Lyminster

As the sun rose the following morning, Peter and Fran Trowill in *White Mischief* (1051) left us because of a work commitment, but rejoined us for our final evening at Warsash. Julian and Mary Biggs in their Crabber 22 *Coco* slipped their lines a few moments later and headed back to Bosham for a long-standing engagement. Coming the other way to join us later in the day were Ray Daniells in *Adagio* (437) and Rod and Joan Young in *Topaz* (619).

A couple of boats headed for Newtown Creek, and Gill and I were entertained by a seal who bobbed up as we sat on our mooring eating our lunch. Maybe this sighting explains our failure to catch any mackerel this year. Most of the fleet took advantage of the extreme high tide to go through the Yarmouth swing bridge and explore the River Yar. Rafting up was *de rigueur* and, taking with them what food they could muster, everyone joined Trevor Thomas and Jenny Bain for lunch on *No Rival* (Trevor's awesome Nonsuch 30).

Berthing in Yarmouth Harbour on a spring ebb tide never ceases to entertain, and this day was no exception as the fleet converged from Newtown and from the top of the Yar - all arriving together of course. And there was one more surprise after we had tucked into our berths after another hearty meal, this time in the wonderful surroundings of the Royal Solent Yacht Club. Near the top of the tide, under the full moon, we were all thrown about as the harbour began to swirl and

roll, despite the absence of any wind. It lasted for over an hour, and Jane Willard described it as like being in a washing machine!



Relaxing in Yarmouth

Thursday morning began with a Treasure Hunt briefing, led by Tim and Ruth Tayler in *Kittiwake* (722). They had put a huge effort into preparing it last year for International Shrimper Week, but only a couple of crews attempted it then as the rest of us adopted survival mode to run from the Beaulieu River to the Hamble in a F6-7. One who did so was Robin Wearn, who nobly offered

not to repeat what must have been an excellent feat of

seamanship. As we headed for the first clue near the entrance to the Beaulieu River, we bade farewell to *Black Sheep* (435), sailed by Ian Fisher, Helen Atkinson and Jester, their third crew member and an excellent sea dog.

The treasure hunt took us into Southampton Water and then to the Hamble River. It certainly sharpened up our navigation and observation skills. Which way up do you hold that old and long-forgotten hand-bearing compass? How close are you allowed to get to Fawley oil jetty? (We found that if you can read the notice you are already too close.) What IS the name of that cardinal mark we pass every time we come out of the Hamble?

It also proved to be a lesson in not forgetting to watch out for lobster pots and giving container ships a wide berth (the Harbour Master who approached in his launch with his light flashing was most polite about it, we're told). Excuses for failing to answer all the questions included: a pirate's parrot fouled the question sheet and we couldn't read the clues, a container ship got in the way, and a seagull was hiding the clue on the top of a mark.

Having made as good an attempt as we could at the clues, we all made our way to Warsash. The three local Shrimpers used their own moorings, leaving room for

Trevor and Sue Bryant (*Little Egret* - 1100) to fit the five remaining Shrimpers on the club jetty, and for *No Rival* and *Nellie B* to tie up on the Harbour Master's jetty.



Warsash Sailing Club (photo: <http://www.warsashsc.org.uk>)

Warsash Sailing Club is a new venue on the Solent Shrimper 'circuit,' and it turned out to be a revelation - a lovely, intimate clubhouse where members pull together to get things done. In this spirit Trevor and Sue Bryant opened the bar early for us, just as Olaf and Lizzi Petersen (*Little Auk* - 123) joined us for the evening.

We were then treated to one last excellent dinner to send us all on our separate ways the following morning. Afterwards Tim and Ruth announced the winners of the Treasure Hunt. In 3rd place were Julia Slatter and Mike Hunter, in 2nd place were ourselves, and in 1st place were John and Jacquie Frampton (*Jester* - 1112).

Heading for the Southampton Boat Show the following morning, we slipped our lines at dawn to motor up river, and cast a last glance at the sleeping Shrimpers on the Warsash Sailing Club jetty. Making our way up to our mooring off Mercury, the Hamble was at its magical best, with a few moored boats laying over on the mud on the extreme low tide. The red glow of the sun cast reflections of the hulls and masts across the glassy water, and the silence was broken only by our engine. One more special memory to end the week, and no camera - aaaah!

Steve and Gill Evatt - Cornish Yawl *Nellie B*