

## ROUND THE ISLAND RACE 1996

### Friday

A long weekend ahead eagerly awaited because this is the weekend of the Round the Island Race. So it's down to Chichester to meet Mike, my crew and load up the Shrimper (Thrift) with provisions and off we go out to the harbour entrance.

I hope this isn't a sign of things to come because with wind across tide, one minute we have the bowsprit facing skywards and the next its trying to dig itself into the sand of the bar. Despite the elements we press on towards the Solent. After a long hard beat as far as Wootton we decide to conserve our energy for the Race and put the old faithful mariner outboard on. Chug, chug and putt the rest of the way into Cowes to dry out, hopefully before tomorrow's race.

### Saturday

9.10am the gun goes and we're off. We're late across the line, due to an extra 10 minutes in Thrifts' luxurious bunks. All the other Shrimpers are away in front of us, those that we can see anyway. It's a long hard beat with especially rough patches off Gurnards Ledge, Yarmouth and down through the Hurst Narrows.

After taking many a wave on board followed by lots and lots of pumping to clear it out again and stopping to try and pick up somebody's lost lifebuoy (unsuccessfully), it's down to the Needles with Betsy of Emsworth in front of us. We watch to see if he will go through the gap between the wreck and the lighthouse, he does, so we follow in his wake. Shrimpers are a bit thinner on the ground now.

We heard afterwards that a number of the fleet had been caught in the Shrimper traps of Yarmouth, Lyminster and Keyhaven. These traps are cunningly baited with hot food and bottles of wine.

Now we are round the Needles and we think that Betsy has gone out to sea. We imagine that he's in search of more wind, he's a brave man, as we go inshore in search of a little less. Now is the time for some downwind sailing and the Shrimper really flies.

One reef in the main and a poled out jib and we are sizzling along with some nice big waves under us, WHOOPS! and one over us. A big wave has just come aboard and hitched a ride in our cockpit, my can of drink is now 50% sea water and my sausage roll has just received a 5.9 for its imitation of a sock in a washing machine. I swim the couple of strokes across the Shrimpers generous cockpit to have a word with Mike. "Mike, old chap, do you think you could possibly steer round the big ones, my lunch is now completely ruined (or words to that effect)!!!!

This is really good sailing and it never ceases to amaze us how well the Shrimper performs against much bigger boats, 30, 32 and 34 footers as we can just match them for speed. The skipper of one Moody 31 crept up alongside and complained bitterly that it had taken an hour and three quarters just to catch us up. We suggested that he sold the Moody and bought a Shrimper!!!

Up at St Catherine's there's drama, an orange flare is going off. There is a 32 footer with its jib thrashing around and going nowhere. There's a helicopter above and a lifeboat rushing past us. On the radio we hear that somebody has been hurt and is going to be lifted off.

We heard afterwards that the wind speeds were getting up to 32 knots, we can't verify this as we have no wind speed indicator. We work on the principle that it's bad to have instruments that might frighten us.

Once round St Catherine's we dip down into the bay to try and get out of some of the tide. The winds are quite strong still but we're going along quite nicely. We can't see anymore Shrimpers around, this is a good sign for us and we hope that we're in the lead.

Around the Bembridge Ledge we dive inshore again to try and reduce the tide effects. It's a little bit of a struggle down in here, then when we tack out to come up round the Fort and back into the Solent, there's Betsy on our tail again.

We think we're well ahead of him but as we tack out clear of the fort we get entangled with a mass of big boats who steal all our wind and slow us right down and Betsy shoots round the Fort.

I think there is going to be a battle on here, and there is! Tacking out into the tide and back onto the sand again. Tack for tack and we're gradually pulling out on Betsy, who we think has some kind mainsheet problem.

We're getting worried about the time element because the race must finish by 9.30pm. We eventually scrape across the line with just 7 minutes to go, followed by Sandy in Betsy of Emsworth a few minutes later. Then we motor to the declaration barge and hand in our piece of paper and carry on into Cowes to find a berth for the night.

It's been a really good Round the Island Race once again. We hope to see a few more Shrimpers in it next year. It should be easier because the start is earlier which gives us another 2 hours. It's really super sailing, don't miss it.

GO ON, HAVE A GO!!!!!!!

JOHN KEEPING No.96

### Round the Island Race 1996

A very creditable 12 Shrimpers were entered for the race this year. Unfortunately, the weather broke during the night, and crews awoke to a SW 5/6, with a forecast of 'gusting 7' for the south of the island. Everyone made it to the start line, but after that it all went downhill. Although 2 reefs in the main, and a scrap of jib, would have been sensible, this was a race after all, so caution went to the wind. An extremely wet and hard beat down the west Solent, saw all but 2 boats putting into harbour for a very long lunch break. Only Sandy Woodward (459 Betsy) and last years winner, John Keeping (96 Thrift) continued round the Needles. They both agree that the trip was a bit hairy. Sandy sustained a jammed mainsheet traveller, and both boats had to constantly pump out the cockpit. Sandy also had a flooded aft locker, and John learnt that if you want to sleep in a dry bunk, you need to keep the top washboard in place. On the home straight to Cowes, John just managed to keep ahead, to win for the second year. Congratulations to both crews for their performance.

SALCOMBE CALLING.....

Mike Fenton "Horatio" No.416 would like to contact Owners interested in starting a Salcombe Shrimper Fleet.

'I acquired 'Horatio' a Shrimper Inboard No.416 at the start of the 1996 season. Previously I had sailed a Drascombe Lugger and a Corribee in the Salcombe Estuary but had found drawbacks to both of these, the poor windward performance of one and the inaccessible outboard motor of the other, had disappointed me. I had often seen Shrimpers in the Estuary and admired their lines. I had also found the Salcombe Yawl, which my Wife races, rather too difficult to handle in a bit of a blow. So, when an inboard model in remarkably good condition was offered to me I couldn't believe my good fortune. I have now enjoyed a considerable amount of sailing in the boat, both single-handed & crewed, and am more than delighted. So much so that I wondered whether anyone who owns a Shrimper in the Salcombe Estuary area would be interested in helping me to form a local Fleet with a view to taking part in local rallies, meetings etc. and to try and get a class race set-up in one of the Regattas that take place here in July & August. There was also an inaugural Festival for Classic Boats held in early June and it appears that this will be continued so that would be a further opportunity for Shrimpers to get together. If any of you would like to get in touch with me on 01548 844053 I would be happy to discuss the project in greater detail.

Mike Fenton. '