

Log

Yacht:

Daisy's

First Time Round Anglesey

Dates:

25 to 26 May 2013



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Introduction

Circumnavigating things has an inexplicable attraction to yachtsmen. For some the world alone is not enough, it has to be a first or the fastest or by the hardest route. For others dashing round a few buoys trying to be faster than the competition is an end in itself. Our ambitions were somewhere in between the extremes:- To sail a small boat around the navigationally challenging island of Anglesey in North Wales.

The waters around Anglesey are renowned for their tidal streams of up to 8 knots, through the notorious rock strewn Swellies in the Menai Straits, the mighty tide races, off the bird watcher's paradise of South Stack and the Skerries Rocks off Carmel Head the island's north western point where the tides turn from north-south to east-west. There are many delightful sheltered bays. But they may not provide shelter when and where you need it. Many are also strewn with some of the oldest and hardest rocks in Britain and backed by storm beaches testifying to the great forces nature used to make and shape Anglesey.

Our first thoughts were to sail round in a Drascome Lugger. A night passage at low water slack was my introduction to the Swellies. Two wetsuit clad swimmers clambering over the Swellies Rock proved this was a place for serious sportsmen and adrenalin junkies. Our passage was tamer, following the Caernarfon Harbour Trust's excellent directions, advice and chartlet on a calm night made the passage seem straight forward. A night sleeping on the deck of the Lugger tied to a mooring off Plas Newedd watching the phosphorescence and stars was unforgettable. In good weather we also crossed the shifting sands of Caernarfon Bar to the magical island of Llanddwyn home to St. Dwywnwen, Wales' patron saint of love. However an extremely wet, wind over tide, return from Caernarfon through the Swellies to our mooring at Beaumaris a couple of years later reminded us that we are both past 50 and being cold and wet for any length of time is not fun anymore.

Enter "*Daisy*". *Daisy* is a Cornish Shrimper built in 1988. She spent the first years of her life sailing in the Baltic. She then passed to Sam Llewellyn the sailing writer who used her as his muse for the inspiring "Minimum Boat" series published in Practical Boat Owner. We bought *Daisy* from Sam in 2012.

The Cornish Shrimper is a very popular design of trailer sailer, a "Plastic Gaffer" of which over a thousand have now been built. At 19'3" long 7'3" beam and a galvanised steel centreboard she is small but quite seaworthy in coastal waters. Sam had written articles about sailing *Daisy* around the remoter parts of the Hebrides north of Ardnamurchan in convoy with a select group of friends in similar boats. The Shrimper Owners Association website includes logs of many adventurous and not so adventurous voyages.

For the 2012 season with a mix of family and work commitments, less than ideal weather, we invested time learning the ways of a gaff rigged boat. We kept our sailing largely in the Straits and out to Llanddwyn Island. Our big sailing trip in 2012 was a charter to the Hebrides, leaving *Daisy* to sulk on the mud at Beaumaris.

2013 was the year we were going to "do Anglesey". So with the manic obsession of the mountain bagger we spent the winter planning and preparing.

Planning

Though it is feasible to complete the circumnavigation through the three principle tide gates in a little over one tidal cycle, a break, usually at Holyhead, is more usual.

Given the capricious nature of the North Wales weather a bit of leeway suggested allowing a window of three or four days would be prudent for our first attempt.

The next question is clockwise or anti clockwise. If going clockwise from Beaumaris the first tide gate is high water slack in the Swellies. However a fluke of the Anglesey tides means that slack water and high water do not necessarily coincide in the straits. This would allow us to carry the ebb down to and across Caernarfon Bar. The Bar is approximately 4 miles of shifting sands with shallow water which picks up a steep and dangerous swell when wind and tide are opposed. Next comes a 20 mile plug against a light ebb current up the west coast to South Stack this current gets stronger as South Stack is approached. However low water slack at the Stacks avoids the fearsome race, before carrying the first of the flood into Holyhead. The next tide gate is the narrow gap between Carmel Head and the Skerries. In wind over tide with a rough sea bed this gate has a deservedly fearsome reputation. At slack water or with light wind with tide it is a much more realistic proposition for a small boat. The tide along the north coast runs at up to 6 knots in springs before rounding Point Lynus for either the open crossing to Puffin Island or hugging the coast to Moelfre before crossing to Puffin Island and the last leg up the Straits to Beaumaris. Light to moderate southerlies favour this route.

Anti-clockwise I would aim for high water slack at Point Lynus then carry the ebb to Holyhead or if possible to avoid the race past the Stacks onto the south coast then carry the flood over Caernarfon Bar to get to the Swellies for High Water Slack. Light to moderate Northerlies favour this route.

At spring tides high water is around mid-day / midnight. At neaps 6am / 6pm.

We chose the late May bank holiday weekend so as to have a chance to go with other North West Venturers YC boats to the Isle of Man and back if conditions were perfect, round Anglesey if they were ok or hole up in the Straits with a good book or two if they were not. Leave from families was sanctioned by the senior management months in advance.

Preparing

To preparing *Daisy* for the trip we added a ghoster, a storm jib (ex-mirror dinghy jib) and pride of the ship a new 2.5m long bamboo jib stick, to our normal rig of double reef able mainsail and roller reefing genoa,. For navigation our standard set up is PBO small craft almanac, Anglesey and N Wales Pilot, UKHO tough charts for the area and latest information on the Caernarfon Bar buoys downloaded from then harbour trust website. To try out this electronic navigation stuff, we added a couple of Garmin hand held GPS units and a 3G Ipad with Imray raster chart plotter and tide plotter apps. For communication we carry a Standard Horizon handheld VHF radio and an old world band receiver. We also carry mobile smart phones with Pocket Gribb, Marine Weather and AIS apps. 3G reception around the island is generally very good.

Preparing ourselves included losing a load of weight, checking life jackets and upgrading Gordon's waterproofs to breathable Helly Hansens. A suit with the added advantage that he could also breath in it. Gordon also fitted in an RYA Coastal Skipper practical course in Scotland along with my wife and a couple of other friends.



The Log

25 May 2013:- Round Anglesey Clockwise

Date	Saturday 25 May 2013		
From	Beaumaris	Towards	Holyhead

Tides

Dover	HW	11:48BST				
Port	Holyhead			Port		
HM	11:03BST	HW	23.25	HM		HW
LW	04:46	LW	17:11	LW		LW

Weather forecast

Time	06:00	Gale Warnings	None		
Gen Synop					
Area	Wind	Sea	Weather	Vis	
Irish Sea	SW 2-3	Slight	Fair	Good	

Deck Log

Time	Course	Log	Dist	Wind	Notes
08:50					Left mooring to beach for loading & victualing
09:20	240	0	0	NE 1	Departed Gallows Point under engine
10:03		3		NE 1	Under Menai Bridge, weather glorious, Suntan Cream.
11:00		8.5		SE 2-3	
12:00	315	15.1		SW 2	Over Caernarfon Bar, engine off
13:10	310	19.2		WSW 1-2	Engine on as needed to keep to time for tide gate at S Stack
14:50					Engine off- refuelled with 5 l petrol
16:05		28.7		WSW 1-2	Tacking out of Treaddur Bay
17:20	340	31.8		0	Drifted past SStack turned by eddies.
17:21					Engine on
18:20		36.9		WSW 1-2	Moored Holyhead marina

Day Summary

Crew	Gordon, Chris,		
Hours underway	9.5		
Log	37		

Time	Notes
Friday	Arrived at NWVYC club house on Friday evening with high NE winds blowing right into the bay, too rough to contemplate launching the dinghy in the dark then rowing out to <i>Daisy</i> so we slept on the clubhouse floor. Woken at 05:00 by another
Sat	member coming in to make tea and use the facilities. Dozed again until 06:00 before the call of nature overcame the call of the sleeping bag. Overnight the wind had dropped to a pleasant f1 still from the NE. Fried up breakfast, then inflated the Avon, fired up the Seagull and out to <i>Daisy</i> .
08:50	Following our usual practice of beaching <i>Daisy</i> on a rising tide we loaded the kit and victuals, deflated the Avon and stowed it under the cockpit floor. Half an hour after beaching we were off, Gordon finishing the stowage below as we headed down the straits to catch our first Tide Gate, HW slack at the Swellies. The usual crop of high speed gin palaces played havoc with the moored boats.
09:30	Radio Message " <i>Motorboat approaching Menai Bridge Moorings at speed please slow down</i> ".....silence..... " <i>Motorboat XXXX Please slow down though the moorings</i> " " <i>This is XXXX I did not know there was a speed limit</i> ".... " <i>There is obviously a lot you don't know</i> "....Silence except for every other boat overhearing the conversation. Whoops of delight, laughter and shouts of "Nice one" echoed from the hills. XXXX slowed down.
10:03	<p><i>Slack Water at the Swellies.</i> Even so between the bridges and past the fearsome Gribbin Rock and the Swellies eddies and boils played with <i>Daisy's</i> keel. The sun shone, sun tan lotion was applied and coats were kept buttoned high against the cold. Past Llanfair church, Vaenol, Plas Newedd, Llanedwan Church, Porth Dinorwic, we motored "as fast as the wind", but at f0-1 that is not a great claim.</p> <p>Avoiding the fleet of Optimists race training from Plas Menai we closed the Anglesey shore below the parish of Llanidan, birth place of my Great, Great, Great, Grandfather and untold generations before. Like so many of his generation agricultural poverty after the ending of the Napoleonic Wars drove him from the land to seek work in the "Dickensian" London of the early years of Victoria's reign.</p> <p>On past Waterloo Port, The Mermaid and the imposing parapets of Caernarfon Castle and onto the opening vista of Abermenai and the Fort Belan Narrows. All the while the mighty shoulder of Snowdonia filled the Eastern horizon.</p>
12:00	We turned the South Westerly wind from our head to our beam as we crossed the bar, stopped the engine and laid course for the Stacks. Past the lovely Llanddwyn Island home to Wales' patron saint of love we drifted on the light SW wind. On across the dune backed Malltreath Bay and Aberfraw to the low cliffs topped by the Llangwyfanisaf motor racing circuit. Motorbikes tearing round in the sunshine though the noise was dulled by the onshore breeze, which as we passed, tuned more westerly. Our speed was countered by the ebb tide, so we fired up the engine again to keep to time for the tide gate at the stacks. Past Rhosneigur and on towards Treadur, we killed the engine by the Ynysonedd Gwylanod rocks off Rhoscolyn and refuelled then dozed and tacked our way across Treadur Bay closing a Drascombe Lugger which hugged the shore, past anglers hoping for a bite and sea kayakers playing the gentle swell. Close tacking we caught the back eddies of the dying ebb which carried us to Penrhyn Mawr and the start of the rising cliffs of Holy Island. With slack water we ghosted across Abraham's Bosom, then close in under the guillemot coated cliffs towards the South Stack.



17:31 *Slack Water at South Stack*

17:21 In bright cold sunshine we drifted to the South Stack under the great fog horn and light just as the tide turned. But eddies spun *Daisy* so time for some steerage way and a motor past North Stack (cottages For Sale, according to the graffiti on the wall) while a porpoise played the eddies.



As the sun fell below the peak the first wisps of cirrus, gave a hint of the trouble brewing. Holyhead breakwater was beckoning ahead, but it took another half an hour to pass it then a further twenty minutes inside before we reached the Marina. As we rounded the breakwater we were joined by Gaffers, carrying the last of the ebb from the north, assembling in Holyhead to meet the Old Gaffers 50th Anniversary round Britain Challenge.

18:20

“Free Berthing For Gaffers” was an offer we could not resist, also time to try out the short awning which came with *Daisy*. By the time we had secured, tidied ship, booked in and abluted the party was underway in the sailing club restaurant. Greeted by the ever enthusiastic Sue Farrer we joined the fun. The threat of gales from the north the following evening were hot topics of conversation. Refilling our spare petrol tank was achieved thanks to the generous Sue, her car and a quick dash across town to the all night filling station. Then back to the bar to complete our own refuelling.

As midnight approached so did three of the Round Britain Challenge Gaffers. We decamped to the pontoons to greet and help moor them. Most spectacular of the night was Windbreker which from the dark of the bay approached. Then, as she came alongside, switched on deck lights to reveal a sight to match the glory of any Christmas lights.

20 hours after leaving them we returned to the warmth of sleeping bags, this time in *Daisy's* snug cabin, with alarm set to catch the early shipping forecast.



26 May 2013:- Round Anglesey Clockwise

Date	Sunday 26 th May 2013		
From	Holyhead	Towards	Beaumaris Via Skerries

Tides

Dover	HW	12:51				
Port	Holyhead			Port		
HM	11:51	HW	-	HM		HW
LW	05:34	LW	17:58	LW		LW

Weather forecast


Time	05:00	Gale Warnings	
Gen Synop			
Area	Wind	Sea	Weather Vis
Irish Sea	V4to SW5-7 /G8 later	Sl/Mod	Rain later Good / Poor

Deck Log

Time	Course	Log	Dist	Wind	Notes
06:00		36.9		S 3	Left pontoon heading for Carmel Head with Old Gaffer "Comrades"
					Back Bearing on Stacks 211°T to Skerries Light Bearing 260°T
07:20	100	45.2		S 3	Turn to head East just beyond Carmel Head, Engine off, Sails up
08:10					Used engine to clear W Mouse. Poked nose into Porth Wen: Mistral, Hunter's Moon & Sarico preparing to leave for IoM
08:45	110	55.6		S3-4	Point Lynas, took in 1 st Reef
09:45	100	61.2		S 5	Sailed into Molfre, no shelter so carried on for Straits
11:00		70.0			Trwyn Ddu then tack up Straits
12:35		75.3			Sailed onto mooring

Day Summary

Crew	Chris & Gordon	
Hours underway	6.5	
Log	38.4	

Time	Notes
	<p>After the dreamlike quality of yesterday, high winds and a wind shift overnight left a dull early morning. The greyness threatened more to come with the shipping forecasts confirming it. Back to the realities of sailing Welsh waters. No chance of staying for the gaffer's post hangover festivities, it was the early tide for us.</p>
05:19	<p><i>Slack Water at the Skerries</i></p>
05:54	<p><i>Slack Water at South Stack</i></p>
06:00	<p>We were not alone as we quietly motored out past other sleeping Gaffers. <i>Annabel J</i> which had slipped in during the early hours. <i>Comrades</i> a blue hulled nobby was also heading out for Carmel Head as we made our way to sea past the long breakwater. An oily swell from the SW greeted us as we crossed Holyhead Bay. Approaching the skerries our speed picked up and the fingers of tide started to play gently at first with <i>Daisy's</i> keel. Gordon prepared a hearty breakfast of bacon butties, as the swirls and up-wellings sent up from the submerged stacks became more pronounced.</p>
	
07:20	<p>Skerries Slack + 2 Hours: We took the middle passage keeping well off the headland and the skerries, while <i>Comrades</i> slipped through close under Carmel Head. 210°T back bearings on North Stack with South Stack just opening, confirmed our line while the iPad plotter showed progress and a hand-held GPS showed increasing Speed over Ground. A standing wave across our route rose from the depths then was soon behind us. More boils and eddies followed until the 260°T cross bearing from the Skerries Light gave us our turning mark. Up sails and off with the engine to start the 6-8 knot traveller ride along Anglesey's North Coast. Swept by the tide between the West Mouse and Coal Rock to the north of Victoria Bank past the great bulk of Wylfa Power Station.</p>

08:10 A late decision to cut inside Middle Mouse almost lead to disaster as the tide swept us on towards the rocks. A quick burst of engine saw us clear and another lesson learned. Tacking close in under the cliffs we aimed for Porth Wen. Ferry gliding to jump off the travelator we explored deep into this sheltered anchorage backed by the abandoned brick works. Several of the larger yachts from NWVYC were anchored in the bay preparing to depart for the Isle of Man. Then back out into the tidal stream to be swept past, East Mouse, Amlwch and Point Lynas.

08:45 Then the wind hit us. One reef quickly pulled in stabilised matters as we close hauled across Fresh Water Bay, Dulas Bay and hauled into Moelfre. The stream of yachts and motor cruisers leaving Moelfre as the skies darkened giving a

09:45 forewarning of the lack of shelter, so we eased sheets for Trwn Ddu and the entrance to the Straits. On the horizon other gaffers started to appear heading for the shelter of the straits and beyond.

11:00 Turned in past Puffin Island then long tacks in company well over the sands and up to Beaumaris. Increasing wind all the way to the mooring. Leaving *Daisy* on the mooring we went ashore for a brew and lunch in the club house but the winds

12:35 picked up F4 to 5 to 6 and above. There was no getting back to *Daisy* until the tide dropped. The sky cleared but the wind blew up and up



16:00 We waded over the mud to collect cloths and bedding before settling down for another night on the Clubhouse floor.

Mon The next day there was no forecast improvement in the weather so, after finishing off some maintenance tasks, we headed for home and families to plan our next venture.

References

Charts

Imray Charts – C52

UKHO tough charts

Admiralty Symbols and Abbreviations

Admiralty Tidal Stream Atlas

Pilots

Imray – Cruising Anglesey and Adjoining Waters

PBO Small Craft Almanac 2013

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