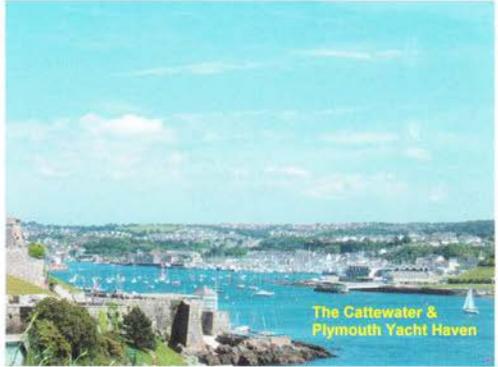


Winkle on the Tamar – Keith & Jackie Thatcher

Over the six seasons that we have owned her, *Winkle* (144) has taken us to some wonderful sailing waters, and Plymouth (venue for National Shrimper Week 2008) must be one of the best. Originally a farming community on the west bank of the river Sutton (now Sutton Harbour), the city stands at the confluence of two rivers, Tamar and Plym. To seaward lies Plymouth Sound offering excellent sailing sheltered from the prevailing SW winds, whilst the Tamar, the boundary between Devon and Cornwall, is navigable for over fifteen miles inland. All this makes ideal Shrimper territory.



Plymouth Yacht Haven, our base for the Week, faces the city on the south shore of the Cattewater channel between Mount Batten and the village of Turnchapel. Close to the Sound, it also has excellent access to the Barbican via a ferry from Mount Batten.

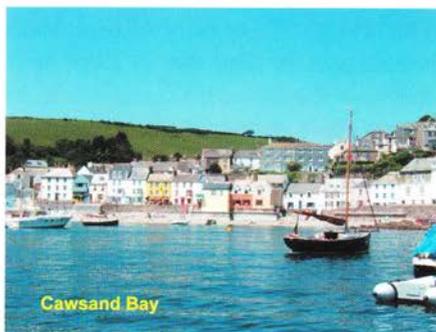
On two previous Shrimper Weeks we missed the first night briefing by arriving too late. Determined not to be caught again, we opted to travel to Plymouth on Friday 6 June, and after a faultless journey plus a short wait for the tide to rise over the Yacht Haven slipway, *Winkle* was afloat and ready to go by 1730. The trailer was then taken to Callington to be left with Steve Boote and Hillary Kemp, long-time friends and owners of *Gribble* (28), which took rather longer than envisaged, so it was after 2130 before we could enjoy our fish and chips from the Plymstock take-away.

On Saturday 7 June more Shrimpers arrived in the Yacht Haven. Most came by road, but in late morning a small group arrived by sea from St Mawes, closely followed by Robin Wearn & Peter May in *La Mouette* and John Nicholson in *Takamaka* from the Solent. The full complement of 32 boats made a fine sight in the late afternoon sunshine, but east of Plymouth a black sky told a different story and we were treated to a most spectacular display of thunder and lightning. Sally Hawling, crew aboard *Gentle Breeze* (786), drove through the storm, and she experienced rain so heavy that traffic was forced to a crawl. Luckily the clouds soon disappeared east to drop their rain over Devon. Barry Mellor concluded the

day with his usual highly informative briefing and distribution of information packs (including a very smart SOA bag), which was followed by a delicious BBQ supper at the nearby Mount Batten Sailing Centre.

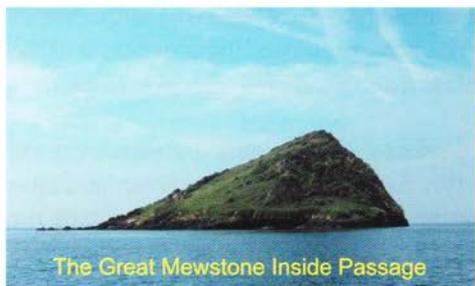
Sunday 8 June dawned warm and sunny, perfect for the planned shakedown sail to Cawsand Bay, three miles SW of Plymouth. Leaving the Yacht Haven just after 1000 and with a 12 knot NNW breeze over the quarter, we were soon out past the breakwater. Resisting the temptation to turn into Cawsand just yet, we continued out of the Sound, rounding Penlee Point before heading west towards Rame Head. Out here the conditions were much fresher with a solid F4 kicking up short chop that promised to make the beat back to Cawsand a little wet. After 20 minutes the lure of a sheltered anchorage in the sun proved too much and we returned to the shelter of the Sound. Other boats were more adventurous, some even circumnavigating the Eddystone Lighthouse, twelve miles offshore.

Inside Cawsand Bay the Shrimper fleet was spotted anchored just off the beach, where *Winkle* joined them. After lunch we rowed ashore, not to join in either of the optional walks (far too hot for energetic pursuits), but to find out more about the area and perhaps look for some Cornish ice-cream. Walking through the narrow streets we discovered that the picturesque cottages seen from the anchorage were actually two distinct villages, Cawsand Bay and Kingsand Bay, each clustered around a small cove of the same name. Now very much a holiday area, it had once been a fishing community and perhaps a fleet of Shrimpers would not have looked so out of place even then. The ice-cream tasted good, too.



The fine weather continued into Monday and by 0930, when the fleet departed for the River Yealm, a light SW breeze was just ruffling the surface of the Sound. Heading south along the eastern shore, we soon had Shag Stone abeam and altered course to pass between Great Mew Stone and Wembury Ledge. Normally inadvisable, the benign conditions, high water and GPS waypoints for both ends of the channel ensured a safe passage and we were soon in Wembury Bay. Here the breeze died away and we motored the last mile to the Yealm entrance.

Winkle on the Tamar



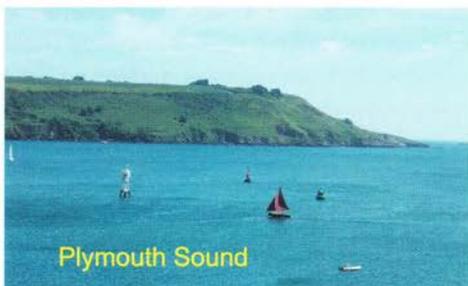
The Great Mewstone Inside Passage

Motoring upstream, we first explored Newton Creek and the picturesque villages of Newton Ferrers and Noss Mayo. Back in the Yealm we continued upstream past Madge Point and picked up a vacant mooring for lunch. After a couple of hours relaxing in the sun we returned downstream to the visitor pontoon off Newton Creek but found it

very busy with little space to moor. This left two choices – head back upstream and pick up another mooring or return to Plymouth and the comfort of the marina. Having already decided on a day ashore instead of entering Tuesday's Challenge Trophy races we opted for the Yacht Haven and, encouraged by a good sailing breeze in the river, headed for the sea.

This was probably not our best decision of the week as in Wembury Bay the river breeze quickly died away. Ever optimistic, we motored out past the Mew Stones and into the Sound, hoping to find more breeze away from the land. Although occasionally ripples disturbed the glassy surface, prompting an attempt at sailing to relieve the monotony of the engine, most of the five mile passage back to Plymouth was made under motor across a mirror calm sea. Just south of Drakes Island a brisk northerly arrived and we sailed into the Cattewater in fine style. The Yacht Haven arrived all too soon and after a five mile passage from Newton Ferrers taking over two hours, *Winkle* finally came alongside just after 1830.

After breakfast on Tuesday, we wished those competitors in the Regatta Challenge Cup good luck then caught the 1030 bus into Plymouth. Waiting at the stop the Shrimper fleet made an impressive sight as racing got under way out in the Sound. Three hours later Plymouth's excellent shopping centre had lost its appeal. From Smeaton's



Plymouth Sound

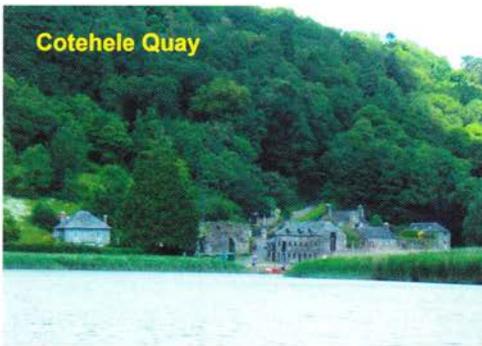
Tower on the Hoe we had an excellent view of the Sound, but were surprised to see just one solitary Shrimper making its way into the Cattewater. Realising that we had missed all the action we headed towards the Barbican whilst looking for answers to Robin & Gillie Whittle's fiendishly difficult nautical quiz, distributed

with the information pack. This quiz became something of an obsession over the rest of our week, *Winkle* often arriving late at the day's destination as a result.

Entering the Barbican we passed Mayflower Sailing Club, which brought back memories of our first sailing holiday in Plymouth competing in the 1970 Mirror Class National Championships. From here a short walk took us to the Mount Batten ferry and, after a diversion to answer a question on the Mount Batten Tower, we arrived back at the Yacht Haven just before 1645. A regular feature during Shrimper Week is the cooking competition, and on our return we found it well under way. Although not taking part this year, the impressive dishes emerging from the basic Shrimper galley had us all amazed and the winning entry would not have looked out of place in a fine restaurant.

Cotehele Quay, 12 miles up the Tamar, was the lunchtime destination for Wednesday, to be followed by a BBQ and overnight stay at Cargreen. Departing before 0900 to take maximum advantage of the flood tide, it seemed for a while that Morwellham Quay, three miles further on, might even be a possibility, but the breeze did not fill in until we entered The Narrows and then from the NW, not ideal for sailing up the Tamar. Despite the fair tide, our progress was slow, especially with detours looking for quiz answers, so at Torpoint, with a good nine miles still to go and only two hours of fair tide left, the jib was furled and we resorted to mechanical propulsion.

As *Winkle* steadily headed north, her crew maintained a sharp lookout for quiz



answers. Approaching Saltash, we mistook clues on the Lynher River for those on the Tamar. Too late we realised our error but, with time running out, had no choice but to continue upstream hoping for better luck on the return journey. We passed Cargreen, a pretty little village on the west bank, shortly followed by Weir Quay on the east. From here the river

winds into the countryside and the bends sometimes allowed a short sail, but inevitably the engine clatter returned whenever the river returned to its northerly heading.

Winkle on the Tamar

Arriving at Cotehele Quay at 1250, almost an hour behind schedule, we rafted up outside three other Shrimpers alongside the quay. With the tide already falling, after a very swift picnic lunch Keith went ashore to find answers for the Cotehele part of the quiz. Returning back on board, it was realised that the boats closest to the quay wall were almost aground. Almost in unison, about 25 Shrimper crews made ready to leave and for a few minutes confusion reigned. Apart from an incident involving *Parnium IV* and a rather irate skipper of a local tripper boat, everyone departed safely and, back on the river, the Shrimpers made their leisurely way downstream to Cargreen for a CIY (Cook it Yourself) BBQ at the yacht club.

At Cargreen we met were by Elizabeth Saudek, who has the dubious distinction of having capsized a Shrimper (see *The Shrimper*, Winter 2002). With most vacant buoys already occupied, *Winkle* rafted up alongside Richard and Avril Shaw in *Gamba* (218). Elizabeth soon appeared alongside to ferry us ashore, where we enjoyed an excellent evening that included a song from June Bird all about Shrimpers in Plymouth.

Peering out from under the cockpit canopy, Thursday morning did not look promising. The overnight rain had cleared, but a blustery NW wind was scudding the clouds across the sky. By 0900, when half the fleet departed on an Engine Race (actually a power and sail race with percentage use of the engine specified at the start) to the Lynher River and St Germans, the sun had returned. The stiff following wind almost made an engine unnecessary and *Clover Four* (819) actually received a prize for completing the course under sail alone.

For those of us not racing, the passage to St Germans was a more leisurely affair, with *Winkle's* crew continuing their search for quiz answers. At Saltash Robin and Gillie had really excelled themselves with multitude of questions on both banks of the river and anyone watching from the shore must have wondered what on earth we were up to as *Winkle* ziz-zagged back and forth through the moorings. Inside the Lynher River we headed west towards Dandy Hole before turning north into the tortuous channel to St Germans Quay, arriving just before 1300.

Again we were one of the back markers (something to do with a certain quiz): boats were already rafted five deep on the quay so we moored alongside *Skylark* (410) anchored in the channel. Members of Quay Sailing Club ferried us ashore and we were enjoying a pint of Old Speckled Hen in the club bar when we realised that *Winkle* and *Skylark* were not where we had left them. After a mad

scramble to reposition in deeper water and drop a second anchor, which held, we returned to our pints and the excellent lunch provided by Quay SC members.

St Germans is dry at low water, so at 1430, with the tide dropping rapidly, we said our farewells to a wonderfully friendly club and headed back to the Tamar. The wind that greeted us, though from astern, suggested a reef, the first of the week, for which we were very thankful when, a short while later, we were hit by a tremendous gust that had us wondering if *Winkle* was going to fly or submerge. Luckily she did neither and we soon passed into



the lee of Mount Wise with an easy sail back to the Yacht Haven. Late afternoon entertainment was provided by a fellow Yacht Haven resident riding a unicycle along the pontoon, which prompted a few bets on how long before he fell in.

Friday the 13th was Do Your Own Thing day, so what did we do? The quiz, of course, motoring first to Laira Bridge at the head of the Cattewater then back across to The Narrows, where we spent ten unsuccessful minutes with binoculars trying to identify the statue on Mount Wise (later found to commemorate Scott of the Antarctic). At 1600, with many blanks still evident, we handed our quiz sheet to Carol Mellor and hoped for the best. We must have got some right; to our surprise, at the End Of Week Dinner held in the Royal South Western Yacht Club, across the Cattewater from the Yacht Haven, *Winkle's* crew was awarded second prize, almost vindicating the amount of time spent gathering answers.

On Saturday we hauled out, this time at Saltash to avoid the problems experienced when launching. With the trailer collected and left with the car under Brunel's bridge, Steve Boote gave Keith a lift back to Mount Batten and at 1130, having said the briefest of farewells to our many friends, we left Plymouth Yacht Haven for the last time. By 1400, rather later than planned after a substantial and rather wet detour into the Sound to avoid powerboat racing off the Hoe, *Winkle* was back on her trailer and at 1630 we were heading east over the Tamar Bridge.

Keith and Jackie Thatcher – *Winkle* (144)