

Bybyn-Bubyn's Coastal Creep

Rock to Bosham

July 2009

The Original Idea.

I acquired my Cornish Shrimper in 2007. She was built in 1989 and is a Mark 1 version with inboard engine. She had lived on Bryher in the Scillies prior to my ownership and I had her transported to her new home at Rock. The previous owner David Bassett had named the boat Lucy after his daughter. After discussion with David I decided to change her name. My wife and I wanted a Cornish name and we searched for something suitable. Using a Cornish/English dictionary we came up with the word Bybyn-bubyn which is Cornish for Shrimp. That was it – Lucy became Bybyn-Bubyn (BB) and the name registered with the SOA. Surprisingly or maybe not no-one else had used that name before!

Until this year all my sailing on BB had been in the Camel Estuary – fun sailing and racing in a couple of Shrimper Weeks. I am doing better in the racing but the competition from the very experienced racing crews is tough but it is all good fun and new owners are welcomed to the fleet.

Having retired from full time work last autumn I began to think what else I could do with BB. Whilst the racing in Rock is great fun, my time there is very limited each year and thus I was not getting as much sailing as I wanted. The obvious idea was to venture away from Rock to somewhere closer to home. Chichester Harbour which is a mere 40 minutes away and an ideal spot seemed the obvious place to head for. Bosham seemed to me to be the best place to go to as it was a Shrimper friendly area. I knew the sailing club and members therein, and it is an ideal sailing area in which to keep BB for a while. How best get to Bosham? Two choices really, 5 hours or so by car or a little longer by sea! So it didn't take me long to decide that the sea option was the one to go for.

The Planning.

The planning began in earnest over the winter. The first thing that I did was to contact those Shrimper owners that I knew or knew of who had made long trips in their own boats. I got in touch with Martin Pumphrey who I had met in Rock and is well known for his Shrimper exploits, Robin Whittle from the East Coast who appears to have an insatiable appetite for long distance sailing, David Dorrell who gave a most informative lecture at Bosham Sailing Club one Saturday evening in January about his circumnavigation of Britain and Clive Woodman who had sailed his Shrimper across the North Sea to Northern Norway. They all gave me useful tips as to how they kitted out their boats for passage sailing and set the scene well for what lay ahead for me.

When was the best time to make a trip of this nature? Statistically June and July are the two months when the chances of gales in the West Country are at their lowest and when the winds are more likely to be from the South West. Shrimper Week in Rock was scheduled for June 26th to July 1st. That was it then I'd plan to leave a few days after Shrimper Week – easy!

Who would be prepared to come with me on a trip of this nature – small boat, big seas, comfort level zero, would any body come or was this to be a single handed venture. I really hoped not. I'm not good on my own and I really wanted a crew to assist and to be able to bounce ideas off. I tentatively mentioned the idea to some chums and was hugely relieved when all of them leapt at the idea and were really enthused. One of my chums Peter Innes-Ker, the owner of a very comfortable 42 foot Sabre "Resolution", who was to crew with me for part of Shrimper Week, suggested that he would like to bring his boat West from the Hamble and meet BB once she had rounded Lands End and the Lizard and then sail back East at the same time as BB. This was a great idea. The other team members who would each spend a part of the journey on BB were Richard Goodman – a very old friend from Hong Kong; Richard Sargent a frequent visitor to the South Devon coast and sailor in that area; another old friend from the Far East and very experienced sailor Philip Currie and last but by no means least Joanna Turnage who has been my crew in Rock for two Shrimper Weeks. She is a very enthusiastic sailor from Lymington who was up for the challenge as well. As I discussed the trip with them all it quickly became known as the "Coastal Creep" due to the likelihood that this journey was going to take awhile as we snuck into ports and harbours at every opportunity. Later you will read that this is not exactly as it turned out!

What additional equipment to take. BB is a very basic Mark 1 Shrimper with few extras; a sound boat with a new set of sails, a compass and not much else. With the help of Brian and Andrew Smith from their yard in Rock the boat was given a thorough workover during the winter and indeed up to a few hours before we actually departed. The engine was given a major service. A fixed VHF radio was added as was a log. For navigation I was to use the relevant paper charts, Reeds English Channel Almanac, the West Country Cruising Guide backed up with two handheld Garmin GPS units, a handheld compass and handheld VHF which was actually used more than the fixed set. A large supply of spare batteries was taken to keep the GPSs and torches in good working order.



Ready for departure from Rock

The Departure

We had scheduled our departure for the early hours of July 3rd, giving us time after the end of the racing week to victual the boat and do last minute fixes and fiddles. As it turned out we had slightly less time to prepare. Shrimper Week 2009 came to an end on July 1st finishing with the Prize Giving Supper. Looking at the longer term weather we could see some "iffy winds" arriving in a few days which might have caused some concern at Lands End so after some discussion I made a decision to leave 24 hours earlier than planned. ETD was now 0130 hours on July 2nd – just a few hours after the Shrimper Supper – not ideal! The supper was great fun. Richard Goodman and I kept off the "sauce" or rather did not over do it. While the supper was going on BB was moored alongside the Club pontoon having been victualled after the last race and before the supper. My wife Mary had gone to great lengths to stock us with appropriate provisions. We did in fact have a bit of a cull as I'm sure we had enough food to last for a cross Atlantic trip not just a trip to the Solent!

Richard and I said our goodbyes at my cottage in Rock. Mary's last words to me were – "You are quite mad!" We then drove down to the boat at about 1030 for a few hours shut-eye before the 0130 departure time. Not a lot of sleep was had. Tension and anticipation was rising. At the appointed time our alarms went off and any pretence at sleeping was over and it was time to go. The weather was awful. It was pouring with rain and there was occasional thunder and not a breath of wind. This was not how I anticipated the beginning of the trip. With engine on we cast off from the Club pontoon and slipped (reasonably) quietly into the estuary on the high tide. Visibility was almost zero with sheeting rain and my eyes unused to the dark and the brighter instrument lights – this was not fun –perhaps I was mad!

I have a good knowledge of the layout of the estuary in daylight but at night in the pouring rain this was rather different. We moved at a snail's pace avoiding the other Shrimpers sleeping at their moorings. The idea of ramming into one of them within minutes of departure was too awful to consider and we eventually made our way to the Padstow navigation buoys. Not before being nearly blinded by our own torches, the blue light of the log, and the red light of the compass – too many colours – too much confusion. I was not comfortable!

The Voyage itself.

There was no turning back – our voyage had begun. Prior to this journey I had never sailed the Shrimper outside the estuary beyond Stepper and Pentire Points. This was a first – in the middle of the night, in the pouring rain – and short of sleep. We were mad! At this time I had not begun to use the GPS and was headed simply out of the bay beyond the last navigation buoy. I began to think of Newlands Rock – out there somewhere and unlit. Where was it? Am I close to it? How far away is it actually? At that moment the sky was lit up with an enormous flash of lightning which illuminated the whole area from Pentire to Stepper. I thought this was my good luck message from the heavens as I mentally filed the picture that had been lit up in front of me. Newlands Rock was way off !The light at Stepper Point became clear and then I saw in the distance the comforting flashes from the light at Trevoze a few miles further down the coast. We continued motoring in the dark. The sea state was flat, not a breath of wind and pleasingly the rain had begun to ease off. As we continued our progress the early anxieties began to pass and both Richard and I felt more comfortable and got on with the job.

Daylight began to appear at about 0400hrs as the dark was replaced by a gentle light appearing from the east beyond the cliffs. We could see again – marvellous and yes we were going in the right direction. We hoisted sails and continued motorsailing to St Ives with not a lot of wind – mainly on the nose. It was time for a cup of tea. Our little gimballed cooking set-up was a huge disappointment as it just did not do its job properly. One had to hold the kettle for the entire duration of boiling – not comfortable and a very dull job. I made a note to talk to the factory when I got home and find out what happens on newer boats!

We arrived at St Ives at 0930 having safely rounded the Stones and moored in the outer harbour until about noon when we were able to move inside with the rising tide. We begged a lift ashore from a passing speed boat, and then spent the rest of the day with Peter and Pru Innes-Ker who had driven down from Rock on their way to meet Resolution, which was on passage to the West Country from the Hamble skippered by

Philip Currie. We learned quickly to take advantage of shore "facilities" as those on a Shrimper are not ideal! BB later dried out on the sands of St Ives. We then waited for the next high tide to take advantage of the ebb towards Lands End. Another early start as we departed at 0400 hours with a very calm sea, little wind and no rain.

As we sailed towards Cape Cornwall and Lands End, again using a combination of sail and motor, we were joined by a huge school of dolphins which swam and played alongside, underneath and around BB. These magnificent creatures were just having early morning fun and certainly made me smile as Richard rested below. The North Cornish cliffs here are very rugged and dotted with the remains of old tin mines; these provide a fascinating backdrop to a broadly unfriendly coastline. Many of the mineshafts ran miles out to sea and we were probably sailing over some of them. As we got closer to Lands End the winds began to freshen and the sea state changed from flat to confused; a lot more chop but not at all rough. We remained dry on board despite the fact that BB was being thrown about a lot more now. The appearance of the Brisons and the Longships lighthouse was a very special moment for Richard and me. Here we were after all the planning in our little 19 foot Shrimper about to go round the most westerly point in the UK. We had not seen another sailing boat since leaving Rock and we were certainly on our own at this point. We rounded at 0730 hours and I telephoned my daughter Hannah in Singapore and told her of our position as she had been keen to learn of our progress.

Our original plan after rounding Lands End was to put into Newlyn or Penzance but now we had a good South Westerly breeze and we were in the mood for going on and having a good sail without the engine. We did some quick calculations and judged that we could get across Mounts Bay and on round the Lizard without suffering from too much adverse tide. A couple of calls to our colleagues ashore informing them of our plans and made for the Helford River as our next destination. We arrived there at 1515 hours some 11 1/4 hours after leaving St Ives a journey of some 50 miles. Not a bad average speed, with no engine from Lands End onwards. It was on this leg that we spotted some tan sails in the distance. These turned out to belong to another Shrimper No 682 who sailed towards us and we exchanged a few words. He was day sailing out of Coverack and was surprised to learn of our plans!

As we arrived at the Helford from the West so did Resolution arrive from the East – within minutes of each other. Fun! Resolution picked up a mooring and the little Shrimper came alongside to much photography and a big welcome from those on board Resolution. It felt very good having got around two of the main obstacles on our trip thus far. The Helford provided a wonderful overnight stop and thanks are due to the Helford River Sailing Club for their hospitality.

It is worth mentioning now that our navigation had worked well and I can only state how superb the handheld GPS performed during all of our time at sea. It had been very worth while inserting waypoint information prior to our departure. In fact most of that had been done during the winter months in the comfort of my study. A few more were added while on passage but it's a lot easier done on dry land. As for communications I had decided to file passage plans by radio with the Coastguard en route and did this on departure from one port and on later arrival at the next destination. There is a downside to naming a boat Bybyn-Bubyn. It's not easy for the radio operator to hear

the name let alone pronounce it on reply. I was continually asked to "spell the name of your vessel" – so I got quite good with my "bravo yankee, bravo yankee....." etc! On one occasion the Falmouth Coastguard asked for the meaning of BB which I told him and in a broad Welsh accent replied – "well how do you expect me to know that as a Welshman"! On later arrival at our next port I called up Falmouth again and was greeted with the response "Hello little Shrimp"! That made me laugh!!



At rest on the Helford after arrival from St Ives

From the Helford on July 4th Richard Goodman and I left for Falmouth at 0830 after Resolution had left at 0730 to drop off a crew member. The weather was not good – a lot of rain and rising winds from the South West. En route to Falmouth we considered crew logistics as Richard G was to leave after this leg and Richard Sargent was to join on Sunday 5th. We all decided that a better final destination for the 4th was Fowey. We had a cracking sail making the 22 mile crossing in 5.5 hours. The weather had cleared and we sailed in bright sunshine, F4 SW winds with a slight chop to the sea. BB fairly surfed down the following seas, an experience which was to be repeated often on this trip – very exciting. We arrived in Fowey at 1400 and whilst dropping sails I took a massive bang to the head from the gaff which came down a bit quicker than expected. No damage just a few less active braincells and a large lump.



Fowey to Salcombe

We planned one lay day in Fowey which actually turned into two as a forecast gale moved in and kept us all in Fowey Harbour. I can think of far worse places in which to be holed up and we took full advantage of our time there by availing ourselves of the superb facilities at the Royal Fowey Yacht Club – many thanks to them too! Peter Innes-Ker and I took the opportunity of motoring up the Fowey River as far as the split to Lerryn and Lostwithiel. It doesn't change, it really is a very pretty stretch of river and it was fun to take the time out to explore up stream. Richard Goodman left on the morning of the 5th having done his stint and was replaced by Richard Sargent who arrived in the evening. The gale kept us in Fowey until 1100 hours on July 7th when we left our pontoon mooring and set sail for Salcombe. At this point in the journey we had covered some 110 miles with quite a few more to go!

As we left Fowey the wind was blowing a good F4/5 occasional 6 – mainly from the North West. We had probably the severest conditions yet on this passage. During this part of the voyage as we were crossing the entrance to Plymouth Sound we saw the RN's latest super frigate HMS Daring leaving the harbour. We were clearly on a course that would have led to a bump had not one of us changed direction. Before I made the move to change we received 5 very loud blasts from Daring's bridge – well at least they'd seen us! We recorded a top speed of 7.9 knots on the log on this leg and had another very exhilarating sail in some pretty active water. I was comforted while surfing the sea to watch the bowsprit so nearly tuck into the water but just never quite doing it – thank goodness! We eventually arrived at Salcombe Bar at 1830 hours in need of a break. The harbour master directed us to the Bag right up river where we joined Resolution. It was at this point that we noticed that the metal bracket holding the tiller to the top of the rudder had worn loose during our rough passage. Some screw tightening was required but on closer examination it was seen that this mounting would be far from satisfactory in anything other than light airs. This had to be watched very carefully going forward.



Going well off Plymouth

We departed the Bag at Salcombe at 0345 hours July 8th, for our next leg all the way to the new Portland Marina which is on the Eastern side of Portland Bill. This was always going to be a big day and the difficulty going East is getting the timing right to go around the Bill. The winds had not eased and we had a steady 20-25 knots of wind all day from the North West. Philip Currie joined me for this leg and we plugged on and on across Lyme Bay passing not much except a couple of working trawlers. The conditions weren't good for eating or drinking. This was a roughish sail and we were kept very busy. We only consumed two cups of tea, and some chocolate as well as some water the whole way across. We had planned this leg at an average speed of 4 knots but in reality we were averaging nearer 6 and thus came into the proximity of Portland far too early for an easy passage around the Bill. In order to allow the tidal flow to suit us better we spent some time sailing closer to the shore and finally made an event free passage around Portland Bill at 1700 hours. Having rounded the Bill we headed to the new marina on what was our first beat of the passage, arriving at 1900 hours some 15 hours after leaving Salcombe. We needed some food and a very large drink! Portland Marina is still very new and a bit short on services, no food was available, so we had to walk about half a mile to the nearest pub on the end of Chesil Beach for a very welcome supper! It was a worth while walk!



Portland to Yarmouth

Before leaving Portland we undertook some further repair work to the rudder and tiller which had suffered again on the Lyme Bay crossing. This time with the aid of matchsticks, glue, some spare screws and a piece of scrap wood found in the marina we fashioned some strengthening of the link between these two critical parts of the boat. Richard Sargent, master craftsman, must take the credit for the repair job.

Richard Sargent and I said goodbye to Portland at 0945 on July 9th bound for Yarmouth Isle of Wight. Winds were initially light but quickly picked up to our now standard F4/5 occ 6. We decided to take a look at Lulworth Cove en route and were headed there just as I noticed a very fast powerboat coming towards us. The powerboat duly arrived alongside with "Range Safety" plastered along its side. Where were we headed we were asked. "Lulworth Cove and then along the coast to Yarmouth IoW" I replied. "Not today Sir" they responded. "Would you mind heading 5 miles on course 145 degrees and then you can resume course East to the Isle of Wight. There is live firing practice taking place today" – OK so we had no real option but to do as we were told and off we went. This change of course rather mucked up our timing later on when we were in the area of St Alban's Ledge and caused us the greatest concern of the trip. We had sailed beyond the ledge but the tide had drawn us closer than we had planned.

We found ourselves in a tricky spot making very little progress against a now fast running ebb tide despite a good breeze and making good speed through the water. It was time to turn the engine on to help us counter the tide. We did struggle a bit here but never went backwards – it was close. I did record at one time having 5.5 knots on the log and 0.7 as our speed over the ground! The GPS did show that we were always making longitudinal progress East so we were winning. We also took continual bearings against the Coast. I'm sure the observers in the National Coastwatch lookout must have been amused at our predicament at this point. Eventually we broke free of the tide and continued our journey. Resolution was watching us from a safe distance and giving us much support over the radio. Thanks Guys!



Running to Anvil Point

As we rounded Anvil Point we headed up towards Christchurch Bay and when we were approximately opposite Swanage we headed further East towards the Needles Channel and by this time the tide which had not helped us one jot earlier now began to be kinder. We passed Bridge Buoy and made our way up the Channel towards Hurst and the Isle of Wight. By the time we reached Hurst Narrows the spring tide was in full flood and BB positively screamed through with 10.5 knots of SOG and 5.5 through the water. We entered Yarmouth Harbour, again with a very strong tide, and moored up at 2030 hours – another hard day's sail, from Portland and whilst the journey was not yet over we felt that we had very nearly done it. A good meal ashore followed by a sound sleep and a couple of lay days ahead were all welcome prospects.

July 10th saw Resolution go home to the Hamble while we motored BB across to Lymington where BB would rest for a couple of days before continuing to Bosham. It was at this part of the journey when I was to link up with the Chichester and Solent Shrimpers who were on a rally in the Solent.

July 13th. Mary and I sailed BB from Lymington to Beaulieu. A short journey which should have been uneventful except that Mary, who is fond of light airs sailing, was not too pleased to be cracked on the head by the boom on more than one occasion on the short 7.5 mile journey and was heard to announce " I hate sailing"! I hope for easier conditions soon when she will have a more comfortable and enjoyable time! The wind was still blowing strongly. At the entrance to the Beaulieu River we had a glitch dropping the main with the too loose topping lift getting snagged – this all happening as a fleet of large racing yachts were bearing down on us. Not great really!.... The problem was duly solved and we motored up the beautiful Beaulieu River to Bucklers Hard.



At Beaulieu being joined by the Solent and Chichester Shrimpers

The Solent Shrimpers led by Trevor Thomas arrived the next day and were then planning to sail to Bembridge and later Hayling Island. Sadly the weather blew up and we were gale bound in Beaulieu until the 16th when we all left bound for Chichester Harbour. The bulk of the Shrimpers headed for Northney Marina on Hayling and I, together with Joanna Turnage, headed for our final destination Bosham. The wind blew from the North East and we beat up the Solent towards Chichester Harbour, where I had first learnt to sail some 50 years ago and not been back to since. Our Solent sail was great fun and challenging at one point when we came across a large racing fleet going from South to North as we progressed West to East. They were all flying spinnakers and there were a lot of them. We had some interesting manoeuvring as we threaded our way through them all. It was an emotional moment when we finally entered the Harbour. As we picked up our mooring, in sight of Bosham Church and the Sailing Club, at 1530 and some 300 miles since leaving Rock I thanked Joanna for her part and said "Job done"! Bosham Sailing Club kindly provided a launch to take us ashore with all our kit for which many thanks.



On her mooring at Bosham

Now I can thank everyone who helped make the Coastal Creep possible – Mary my wife, Peter Innes-Ker, Philip Currie, Richard Goodman, Richard Sargent, and Joanna Turnage for helping bring BB round to Bosham. Thanks to Brian and Andrew Smith for helping in the preparation of BB in their yard in Rock, and to Shrimper sailors - Martin Pumphrey, Robin Whittle, David Dorrell and Clive Woodman for their helpful advice and encouragement to take on the challenge. I would encourage other owners to break away and give it ago!

JB August 2009