

Daisy's Cruise to the Commonwealth Games

The original plan had been to sail *Daisy* from her mooring in the Menai Straits via the Isle of Man and Ireland to Scotland for the Commonwealth Games Flotilla and a summer cruise around the Clyde and Inner Hebrides. But those thieves of time work, uncertain weather and other family commitments forced us to invoke Plan B; load *Daisy* on to her trailer and with a brief stop on the drive for some maintenance & polishing, Gordon & Stewart towed her to Largs Yacht Haven and rigged her. My 11 year old daughter Elin and I took the train to Largs a few days later to find *Daisy* launched, basking in 30°C sunshine and ready for fun.

After stowing gear, a thorough check of the rig and smoothies in a shaded café to rehydrate we motored out into the Largs channel and round Great Cumbrae to check over our usually mutinous engine. The clean Scottish waters seemed to suit the beast which started without protest on only the 4th pull and ran smoothly thereafter. Seals and Porpoises played in the currents and Elin found the hatch a great place to sit with the binoculars to spy ships and wildlife aplenty.



This little trip gave Elin the chance to get a feel for the scale of the inner Clyde, not quite the vast oceans Mum had got her fearing. Dinner was Elin's concoction of flask cooked couscous with a Chorizo and tomato sauce.

Flask cooking:-

Works well with couscous, rice and noodles. We use a 500ml (1pt) stainless steel food flask (£10 from Mountain Warehouse). 1/3 fill with couscous or 2/3 fill with Rice or Noodles, add a dollop of vegetable stock to taste and fill with boiling water. Seal and leave to stand while you cook your sauce. Bon Appetite

Day 2 dawned clear and fine with the prospect of another day of Mediterranean conditions. An ideal day to sail around Bute. The shipping forecast from Belfast Coastguard confirmed what we were seeing. So after a bacon butty breakfast we slipped lines and motored out into the Largs channel. The wind picked up then died then filled in again as we crossed Millport Bay leaving the mighty Chinese coal carrier unloading at Hunterston Terminal. As we left Millport Bay we were able to cut the engine and sail out into the Firth of Clyde. A pair of puffins with their bills dull at the end of the breeding season scooted across our bows. We held

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a steady 4.5 to 5 knots as we rounded Garroch Head and made our way up the west coast of Bute, keeping pace with a Sadler 32 until we cut into St Ninian's Bay to anchor for lunch.

Up the West Kyle we passed the paddle steamer Waverly outbound for Loch Fyne then tacked our way up the narrows to the beautiful Caladh Harbour, introducing Elin to the Maids of Bute as we passed. Large Lions Mane jellyfish wafted beneath us fascinating Elin by their sheer size. Her school project on jellyfish had not prepared her for the reality, expecting something much smaller.

Head winds up the East Kyle and the advancing hour encouraged motor sailing. Lifebelt overboard brought the derision of "I told you so" from Elin and an excuse for man overboard drill practice. The slight bend in the Kyle and the opening of Loch Striven brought the wind further abeam and a break from the engine as we gently raced a Westerly Fulmar round Ardmalish Point and in toward Port Bannatyne Marina (or Port Banana as Elin called it).

Elin was soon swimming in the clean waters of Port Bannatyne marina getting to know Catriona the girl from the Motor Cruiser we berthed alongside.

Cleansing showers and dinner of flask cooked noodles with chorizo in creamy mushroom sauce. Elin's recipe was cooked by Dad while the girls exchanged loom band knots and patterns, followed by whiskeys on the flying bridge watching the sunset over Bute.



With 2 days to the Commonwealth Flotilla the smell of polish and sounds of cleaning rose from several of our neighbours next morning. After taking Catriona and her parents for a quick drift around the bay we made for Largs to pick up some suitable unguents to buff up *Daisy* ready for the show. Calm soon gave way to a rising wind as we made our way across Rothesay Bay, by the time we passed Toward Point we had a reef down, coats on and Elin handing out the lifelines as F4 turned to 5+ and the short wind over tide chop sent spray over us. After an hour the wind started to drop as we approached Great Cumbrae By the time we entered the Largs Channel the wind had dropped completely and it was back on with the engine to keep out of the way of the ferries, then into the marina.

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I spent the afternoon with fine wet and dry then cleaners and polishes taking the bloom and muck off Daisy's cockpit then buffing up to a shine. Meanwhile Elin went for another swim. She was lent a mask and snorkel then a "seadoo" electric propulsion unit to scud around the berth. I could resist no more and joined her in the warm water to try out this wonderful toy under the pretext of inspecting Daisy's hull and centerplate.

After dinner, Gordon joined us with all his kit including his "Sea kilt".

Our destination for Friday was James Watt Dock Greenock, mustering point for the Commonwealth Flotilla. First however Gordon wanted to get his car to Port Bannatyne, so at 0600 with Elin asleep in the cabin, Gordon and car left for the first MacBrayne ferry from Wemyss Bay to Rothesay. *Daisy* and I raced for Port Bannatyne. No contest, *Daisy* won hands down on looks, MacBrayne's on timing. Whilst we were sailing across the Clyde, Gordon was sunning himself on the terrace of the Post Office Café in Port Bannatyne, enjoying a bacon butty and coffee, reading all about the Commonwealth Games in the Glasgow Herald. We joined Gordon for breakfast admiring the glorious view up Loch Striven and the East Kyle. 10:30 we cast off and headed up the Clyde to Greenock.

This cruise was bringing back many memories for both Gordon and I who had been brought up sailing on the Clyde and had not been back since we took part in the Drascombe Association 40th Anniversary cruise at Largs. It was great to be heading for the Cloch lighthouse again and seeing the Waverley, steaming past on its way "doon the watter". As we passed the Cloch a family of porpoises obligingly surfaced and put on a show for us. Gordon reminiscing on relatives' houses and places where he played as a child and his time a chef to the crew on the Gourock - Dunoon ferry as a student!



We reported our arrival to the Clyde Port Authority as we passed No. 1 buoy at 14:00, then radioed the flotilla organisers, The Scottish RYA, for directions to our berth in the James Watt Marina in Greenock.

From the freedom of our cruise we were now entering the tightly organised event, with 250 other boats ranging

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from commercial boats such as the MacBrayne ferry "Lochinvar", 72' Challenger round the world yachts, "Swan" a Lerwick Fifie, VIC32 the last working Clyde Puffer and "Wee Annie" a 16' Oysterman, about the only other sailing boat smaller than "Daisy".

As we entered the dock, miles of bunting fluttered in the gentle breeze, wine & whiskey corks popped and ring cans were pulled. RIBs buzzed about officiously but were unable to direct us to a berth so we dropped into a vacant finger and hoped for the best. The last thing we wanted was to be the fender at the inside of an 8 boat stack no matter how friendly the company!

The evening's entertainment started in the redundant sugar warehouses with the skippers' briefing and the arrival of the rest of the MacKellar clan. Kilts donned and sporrans arranged we made for the bar, food and band. A dance troupe performed Scottish dances to modern pipe versions of 1980s rock music. The sun set over the cranes, warehouses and fleet and then the dancing started.....



Flotilla day broke light grey and pleasantly cool after a week of Mediterranean weather. Alison and Stewart had joined us by now and we cooked bacon butties on the pontoon while stowing awning and kit in the cabin. Gordon fully regaled in his "sea" kilt. 08:55 saw us leaving our berth and joining the crush as 250 boats made their way out into the Clyde to start mustering in five predetermined groups. Radio traffic flew, questions answered at the skippers briefing were asked and answered again.

At 10:00 the start was called the groups made their way down river to turn around Clyde Pilot Cutter "Toward" off the Ocean Terminal then process up river bound for Glasgow. Crowds gathered at every vantage point. Fog horns blared. To make it better heard, we connected *Daisy's* to the dinghy bellows creating a sound more akin to a dying cow. Past Greenock Town Hall and Port Glasgow the Flotilla settled into a steady pattern. Gordon had often driven down the river side on the M8 looking out on an empty river. What a sight and pleasure to see the Upper Clyde alive with boats both ahead and astern. On past Dumbarton Rock and under Erskine Bridge, crowds grew and the river narrowed. We waved to the Renfrew Ferry, now a passenger boat rather than the chain operated car ferry which Gordon used when he cycled to university.

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By Braehead shopping centre the crowds were 8-10 deep. Then the shout went out. Our Welsh flag was spotted; Oggie Oggie Oggie, Oi - Oi - Oi, and so the cry went on, and on and on as we made our way up past the old shipyards new apartment blocks and scrap metal yards. Our synchronised waving was matched by a synchronised Mo-bott from the Parker 21 astern of us. To mighty cheers the men in Blue one piece Saltire suits waved from the 35footer ahead, and a fleet of Puffers led by VIC32 followed us up river from Bowling.

As expected organised chaos returned as 250 boats queued up to berth in Princes Dock. We circled by the BAe dock yard, admiring the two aircraft carrier sections, under construction in the yard.

Gordon's mum and wife Loran came down to wave us on at the Riverside Museum next to the clipper Glen Lee. After one last but special Oggie, Oggie, Oggie and a synchronised wave we finally berthed in Princes Dock at 15:45!

That the berthing of 250 yachts, in a temporary marina was achieved in a little over 2 hours without incident is a testament to the organisation RYA Scotland had put into the event. What a day! What a complement to the Commonwealth Games, adding yet another dimension to Glasgow's special event.

The next day Gordon and family took *Daisy* back down the Clyde for a 2 week cruise to Loch Fyne, Arran and beyond. But that is another story.....

Log by **Chris Jones**

Daisy (291)

Photos by Chris Jones and Jacqueline Bryson