

International shrimper week 2015 .

Scotland a week of contrasts

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Well done and thank you to Ian Fisher for organising a fantastic week of many contrasts.

The amazing emerald greens and azure blues with breath taking scenery when the sun shone and the three shades of grey ,light ,dark and wet when it didn't .

The fading grandeur of Rothesay's Victorian architecture and Mount Stewart's marble splendour ,the flat calm and incredible reflections of Caladh anchorage and the washing machine rolling of Millport moorings, the fabulous Victorian toilets in Rothesay and the WARM showers in Largs .But there were not too many midges.

We arrived at Kip marina on the Thursday lunchtime after an easier than expected drive from Southampton to find Brian and Janet rigging for an early launch. The marina staff were incredibly helpful and nothing seemed too much trouble for them. When we said we were planning to slip in they sent an enormous digger to clear the shingle and as the tide came up we launched without drama and had a BBQ in the sunshine by which time Sarah and Ian had turned up with a very shiny ,yet to be wet Shrimper 21 Money Penny.

The start of the interest and boat envy the new boats generated all week.

Tim and Wendy Gray left early for Rothesay to be ready for the Round Bute race 45 miles and unlike the Round the Isle of Wight Race without the benefit of tides.

The next day we were surprised that the boat park was not crawling with rigging shrimpers when we woke and it was only when we were half way through our bike ride around the isolated landscape of Loch Thom that we heard of the lorry fire on the M74 and the dramas of having to do three point turns with the trailers on the motorway! By the time we returned, rather pleased with ourselves as Hampshire doesn't really have hills, the yard was in full swing very efficiently working down the row of shrimpers dropping them into the water and finding them berths.

The fleet set sail for Rothesay the next morning and as we passed south of Toward point lighthouse we were surprised to hear the locals carousing on the beach and rather more surprised when they turned out to be seals but probably with the same idea in mind.

In Rothesay we were berthed in the old fish dock in the centre of the harbour with the help? of Billy Blue Hat who seem to move everyone on as soon as they had tied up. The lifting bridge meant one had to time ones arrivals and departures with the absence of the ferry on the quay.

We had our opening dinner at the Victoria Hotel (how did we manage to walk past that on the way to the dinner?) and Ian gave us our first briefing.

A gentle sail up the coast to Port Bannatyne was planned for the next day with an opportunity to explore local lochs on the way. Our trip up Loch Striven was curtailed as the mountains ahead disappeared into the mist but when we arrived in Port Bannatyne we had a glorious walk across the island to Ettrick Bay where we had heard cakes where to die for and they were. We arrived back as the last of the others left for Rothesay but it was such a glorious afternoon we decided to go off piste and stay with the amazing view out of the back of the boat of the hills coming down to the water. The Russian bar which had entertained most of the fleet at lunch time was open just for us it seemed and our host was a brilliant raconteur and thank you very much for the vodkas. The next morning we tried to get the bus into town to go shopping for the BBQ but failed so walked. All of Bute seems to be for sale so we spent the time deciding what to do with the amazing churches you could buy . While in town we tried to get citronella candles as suggested for the Midges. The lady in the pound shop helpfully said they didn't have any but we could use anti midge cream as that didn't work either but it was not yet the season and why were we going to have a BBQ that evening, hadn't ' we heard the weather forecast .So we bought umbrellas instead.

We re-joined the fleet as they sailed past up the East Kyle of Bute to the Burnt isles more seals at the top and we caught our only mackerel of the trip as we went passed one who may not have been pleased with us for taking his supper but it did taste very good on the BBQ . At the top we diverted to see the Maids of Bute as we had been advised by our friend who had been there before. I am glad we didn't go far out of our way as they are just two bits of painted rock and even a book we had about the island does not make much mention of them only that Para Handy claims to have painted them " for the benefit of the tourists " but as Ian says they weren't painted when he was a boy there must be some doubt to the validity of the tale.

Caladh harbour was amazing not a harbour at all but an inlet protected by a rhododendron covered island so there was no wind and the tide swirling through led to some anchoring excitement but we all went ashore to for a BBQ to the surprise of the honeymoon couple looking for isolation but the umbrellas kept the rain away (mostly) and a good time was had by all.

Next day was race day, kindly laid on by the Isle of Bute Sailing club who sent us on a course with very shifty winds twice round the bay. As shrimpers go very nearly the same speed and the wind was so shifty there were

some interesting rafts at some off the marks. Karen having lead for most of the race went to the wrong last mark so had to go back allowing Seahorse victory. Fish and chips in the club was followed by very wetting rain so the umbrellas where useful after all.

The next day we were fortunate enough to be joined by Andy Mullens who had finished saving us from the Russians for a bit and had a day off before returning south. " the most dangerous person to go sailing with is a middle aged man as they over estimate their ability " he said as we left the harbour, " are you going to reef?" "No" so we had quite an exciting sail in the gusty off shore winds. Poor Jep was not so lucky as his rudder broke but Karen was rapidly back in action rescuing him and taking him back to harbour and then taking the rudder back to Kip to see if it could be fixed, unfortunately not. We anchored off the village green complete with maypole that a previous Lady Bute had had built because she could. Ian lead the route march up to the visitor centre and on to Mount Stewart itself, the ancestral home of the Earl of Bute ,amazingly well preserved . You can hire the chapel for a wedding for £27,000 ,people where most impressed with the plumbing especially an early bidet appropriately called a bottom shower .

When we returned to the boats a lot of people had voted with their keels and returned to Rothesay rather than stay for the BBQ but Trevor and Sally (who had joined the week in Trevor's larger Shrimper! Having sailed up from the Solent over a period of time) showed that they were made of sturdier stuff and soon got the party going. The wind had settled a bit but despite Ros's warning Humbug and Kittiwake decided to go down to Millport on Great Cumbrae early. Not the best call as when the tide turned at 3am those moorings are very rolly. Centreboard up hold on to your bunk put it down and listen to the plate clonking next to your ear. No wonder Ros was smug when we saw her next but it was made up for by the breakfast at the Ritz cafe! A long discussion about where to get the best black pudding and then on to the biking. Gt Cumbrae is a great place to bike with a flat circumnavigation or more challenging central climb but fantastic downhill afterwards.

Faced with a long beat back to Rothesay most of the fleet decided to postpone this pleasure and divert to Largs which was just as well as the Scotch Mist came down and we arrived soaked and frozen. Jon was heard to comment that was the most expensive sail of the holiday as Marie-Do insisted on a pair of boots to make up for it. We were told you had to book supper before 18:30 for a deal but most of where so please to find it warm that we just stayed until closing time.

The next day was drier, still a beat with some impressive looking showers going down firth of Clyde but by tacking not on the wind shifts but for the gaps in the rain we got back to Rothesay without getting too wet for the closing dinner. The Victoria hotel did us proud and thoughts about next year's trip to Holland consoled us for the disappointment of coming to the end of such a variable and enjoyable week.

Our thanks to to Brian and Christine from Habitent who lent us their prototype tent to try on the Shrimper, it was very good at keeping us dry and warm in the Scottish evenings with a few modifications should do the job.

We all made the trip back to Inverkip to be lifted out a few boats stayed on for a few days, Paul and Ros decided to do some sightseeing around Glasgow as well as some more sailing. We spent 2 more days on the boat having a lovely beat up Loch Long and anchoring in a tiny bay only marred by being on the edge of the MOD Trident submarine exclusion area, the police came and wished us good evening. The next day we travelled further up the Loch to Carrick castle, we enjoyed a pleasant walk were a little disappointed to find the castle isn't open to the public but a beautiful setting.

We were unfortunate to find the wind was still against us and had a long beat back to Kip marina. We had the boat pulled out and set on our way home as the forecast was for four days of rain but sunny on the South Coast. We decided to be a little radical and took the boat to Poole, launching at Cobbs Quay Marina. They were surprised we wanted to use their slip and leave the van and trailer there for a week! We then had a pleasant few days going up the Wareham river to Ridge Wharf where we saw Jon and Marie-Do ! (what a small world) a night at Studland a lovely sail in a SW back to Hurst and then home to the Hamble

Tim and Ruth Tayler Kittiwake 722



Loch Long



Rothesay

