

Provisions for a Mini Cruise

“We will have to take provisions” I said, “things to eat”. After years of sailing an open boat (Cornish Coble) I had managed to buy Triplet (815) which has a roof, a stove, and places to lie down. I was quite excited at the prospect of being able to sail here and there, eating and sleeping on board, and had arranged to join the May Mini Cruise organised by the Solent and Chichester section of the SOA. My wife had appraised the sanitary arrangements on board, and rather sportingly suggested that her brother Hilary, who had spent a number of years in the Royal Engineers, might like the idea of a new challenge at sea. “Compo rations” was his suggestion, to which I added hard tack and pemmican.

A visit to the local Co-op revealed that they were out of compo rations, hard tack, and pemmican, so we ended up with muesli, muesli bars, four hand made pork pies, a packet of Ryvita, and a huge pile of tins



We met up with Richard Pottinger (434 *Black Swan*) and sailed from Poole to Hurst, eating our pork pies on the way. For some reason I had decided to go in by the Needles Channel. As we sat becalmed off the Shingles, we saw Richard, who had taken the North Channel, shoot through the entrance and disappear behind the Castle. After a while however, Hilary, who is a somewhat fanatical bird watcher, was delighted to spot an Arctic Skua (quite rare in these parts) stealing a fish from a very disappointed Common Tern. If we had gone by the North Channel we might well have missed that. So we were looking on the bright side.

Some hours later (or so it seemed) we caught up with Richard, who had found the Solent gang anchored in Oxey Lake, having sailed across from East Cowes. This was to be my very first experience of “rafting up” which we managed rather clumsily, but without breaking anything.

Some of our company were for taking a short cut down Narrow Mark channel to Lymington, but in the end we all circled round the marshes and moored up at the Dan Bran Pontoon.

From this point onwards it was really tough going. It went something like this: supper at the Royal Lymington Yacht Club, English breakfast at The Salterns Marina (taking in a Lesser Whitethroat on the way), pre-lunch aperitif including white wine and winkles on Gentle Breeze, lunch at the Royal Solent Yacht Club, and supper at Keyhaven Yacht Club.

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There must have been some sailing in between but I can't remember much about it apart from Gentle Breeze always being somewhere ahead and mostly out of sight. Well, maybe there was a little incident going up to Keyhaven. As usual our Nat Hon Sec had disappeared by the time we rounded the entrance, but we found Jubilate at



anchor. Her crew pointed up the channel and said "they went thatta way". As we pattered upstream there was a sudden grinding from the centre plate. Hil pulled on the rope and the plate shot up, hit the top, and went straight down again, securing us neatly in the middle of the channel, looking like some sort of marine traffic island. The centre plate wire had parted and we were likely to be a fixture until the next spring tide. As I thumbed through my Col Regs trying to decide what sort of symbol should be displayed in this situation, the Harbour Master came by in his RIB, tied up alongside, and heaved us up the channel.

There was plenty of water at the quay and we moored up with the other Shrimpers. I had a spare wire but we could not fix it unless we had the plate up. We fiddled about for a while trying to drag a warp under the boat, but soon realised that we were wasting our time. This was where sailing with Shrimper owners came into its own. Trevor looked down from the quay and said "You'll have to beach her. There's a slipway just round the corner".

The assembled company set to with a will. With some sitting in the stern and others heaving on the bowsprit Triplet was soon settled on the slipway with the plate up. I had a spare cable and some copper wire. Trevor supplied insulating tape and instructions. After a while the job was done. Trevor went off for a well deserved G&T while I took the opportunity to make yet another error of judgement. There had been quite a few on this trip. I decided to try reversing Triplet into her berth alongside the other Shrimpers. In the ensuing confusion there was a certain amount of shouting, rapid removal of Red Ensigns, and deployment of fenders. Happily, by the time we sat down to supper this incident seemed to have been forgotten and we all had a very jolly time as guests of the Keyhaven Yacht Club.



The next day we set off at dawn and sailed back to Poole. On reaching home we left the pile of tins on board and reviewed our list of provisions. The following items were added: lots of spares, white wine, and a good selection of nibbles.

Mike Shearman (*Triplet 815*)