

Shrimper Week 2010 and Thoughts from A New Owner

A 500 mile trip to Scotland as a first test drive with the boat and trailer!

Not perhaps one of the more sensible things I have done this year but that is how I ended up joining the end of the Shrimper gathering in Scotland.

Having bought the boat with just a launching trolley we only collected our road trailer at the end of May. So we were slipping the boat out a week before the event, about the time everyone else was starting their journeys to Scotland; this didn't give us much time to ensure that the trip was going to be a smooth one.

One of the things that convinced my wife and I to buy "Whimbers", as we call her, in January is the strength of the Owners Association and it was always a priority to attend one of the gatherings as soon as possible. Having a ready source of advice and information to hand meant that preparing the boat, trailer and Landy for the journey, and then for the sailing in Scotland, was done correctly and even included a trip to the weighbridge before setting off.

(Whimbrel weighed 1210kg without any extra kit; something to bear in mind when choosing a trailer – see the post and the discussion on the forum. <http://shrimpertalk.takeforum.com/2006/01/08/weight-of-a-shrimper-on-the-trailer/>)

What could go wrong? A short stay in hospital for my wife wasn't on the list but with Lois comfortably recuperating at home I was left to tackle the trip alone. The journey was uneventful and Inverkip Marina had the boat in the water in a friendly, efficient way.

After a delightful drift down Clyde from Inverkip Marina the sight of over 30 Shrimpers crammed into the inner harbour at Rothesay, on the final afternoon of the first week, was an impressive gathering; no wonder they had been turning heads in the small town. My worries about being a week late for introductions was brushed aside by the warm welcome I received as I was ushered into a berth alongside Ian and Wendy (Clover Four - 819) and being able to join them and other friends at a table at the closing reception.

I didn't hear a single grumble from anyone about the week which is a testament to the effort that Ian Fisher and others had put into organising the week. They clearly deserved the thanks that they received that evening. It was sad to arrive at the point when many were having to pack their boats up and head south to whichever part of Europe they were heading but friendships had clearly been made and already talk was turning to the 2011 gathering in Holland. Others were looking forward to further exploring area on the second week, and some for heading north towards Oban. That was my plan but I was very happy to be with the crowd.

Having only day sailed the boat around Plymouth that night was the first I spent onboard so it was interesting to see that I wasn't the only one doing the discreet "bucket shuffle" in the morning.

The following day we basked under a second week of excellent weather, stiffening winds and sunshine, as we headed up north around the Isle of Bute, visiting the gorgeous anchorage at Eilean Dubh, Caladh, “discovered” in the first week on route to Tarbet. There always appeared to be a set of tan sails somewhere in sight although not always going to the same destination unlike in the first week.

Prior preparation was key to staying safe and comfortable, especially sailing single handed without an auto pilot. The pattern of sailing for a few hours in the morning, anchoring or hovering too for lunch, and then striking on seems to be the ideal.

Coming from a background of sailing large yachts, and even driving a few ships, I am still learning to relax slightly about my navigation. Having a boat that can float in a deep puddle takes some of the stress away, especially with a lifting keel, so I am slowly reigning in my alarm at being in less than 3m of water.

As the wind picked up to about F4 on the nose I also learnt a couple of other things; do not expect to make progress fast up wind and that the standard reefing arrangements do not suit themselves to easy use. One item for the list of improvements that every owner has.

Mooring up in Tarbet demonstrated another advantage of a Shrimper. The marina was very busy, our arrival coinciding with a popular race from Irvine, yet the six or so boats proved they could get into the tiniest corners or into the gaps that most sailors think is sensible to leave between boats. I am convinced that we could park “smart car” style along the stern of rafted boats if necessary.

Claud and Sheila welcomed me onto Scalawag, their Crabber 22, with the offer of Pringles; I think wandering down the jetty with a bottle of wine helped with the introductions. Their friends Colin and Heather (Camilla-767) were also heading towards Oban so a flotilla was beginning to form.

By the time we reached the mouth of the Crinan Canal at Ardrishaig, after another day heading to windward, we also had Peewit (125) in company. Mooring up alongside each other was an excellent chance to harvest other owners’ experience and cast a friendly eye over each others boats. There appears to be no snobbery amongst Shrimper owners; some boats are old, others brand new and all shades in between. All of them are loved and, above all, used.

Talking about their new solar panel lead to a debate about what the average electrical consumption is onboard. Only one way to solve the question – get out the multi meter. With Peter’s (Peewit – 125) crewmember Derek and I both having an electrical background we were happy to wire in the instrument into our circuits and then cycle through our limited services. As they did not have any other charging method Peewit were working on a trial and error basis and hoping that the panel would support them for a week of intensive

use; it seemed to be doing fine (perhaps a solar panel is another thing to add to the improvements list?) The readings we found are in the table below.

Item	Current Draw
Battery Selector On only (Whimbers has an LED display of the voltage)	0.07A
Radio listening watch	0.26A
Transmitting at 1W	1.04A
Transmitting at 25W	3.83A
Nav Lights (Port and Stbd only)	0.74A
Masthead Steaming Lt	0.42A
Echo Sounder (Old rotating display type)	0.18 A
Charging Nokia Mobile Phone	0.47A
Garmin GPS 276C Plotter: Charging Only	0.56A
Garmin GPS 276C Plotter: On and Charging	0.65A

Monday saw us transiting the canal and 14 locks. We were in no rush and it took a couple of locks to come up with a system for getting 5 boats in together, operating the lock and leaving it in the correct state for the next user. With an average rise of nearly 3m in each lock this was no minor feat. Just as we were getting into our stride we reached the highest lock and then had to start the process in reverse.

That night we moored up a short walk from the final basin at Crinan and watched the sun set over Jura. That evening also saw Robin and Gillie Whittle (Bumble Chugger -124) arrive having rounded the Mull of Kintyre – certainly an epic when compared with our cruise up Loch Gilp.

Peewit and Clover Four were heading south from here and as I was continuing north I headed out the next day, via a short stop at the very friendly Crinan Boatyard. Incidentally I discovered that a Shrimper is exactly 12 inches shorter than the final lock is wide. A bit of a wind and water overflow mismatch saw me slide out of the canal sideways – hopefully no one was watching other than the bemused lockkeeper!

Now this could be big boys sailing. Other than the couple of islands to the West this was the Atlantic. However, the weather was still favourable and a F4 reach up the Sound of Jura was a fantastic sail. Virtually alone in the area I could swoop into various bays along the coast, stirring the interest of cows drinking at the waters edge, and spotting the occasional seal; eventually anchoring when the tide turned foul (nearly 4kts at one point).

Passing the eastern entrance Gulf of Corryvreckan I resisted any temptation to go in having been through a few years earlier in a much larger yacht. Going through even at the ideal time certainly had the heart racing and left us wishing for an even bigger boat.

As light began to fade, and this is Scotland at nearly the summer solstice so it was late, I anchored up in the lee of Fladda Lighthouse. I woke in the morning and realised that I wasn't alone. The tiny bay was the home to a

dozen large seals, all resting on the rocks around and completely ignoring me and my alfresco cooked breakfast.

The weather was forecast to turn wet so I made a dash towards Oban using the tide and stopped for a late lunch. Much to my surprise I came across the first hint of unfriendliness from the Scottish. Berthing on the empty town quay (nearly 150m wide) I was told by a local official: "can't stop here". My explanation that I was only stopping for lunch, in the café overlooking the boat, and then heading off was met with much huffing. That was Oban's loss as I just grabbed a sandwich and headed off further north. Late that afternoon I reached Dunstaffnage Marina and with excellent timing I boarded a train south to Glasgow as the heavens opened with a torrential downpour.

The heavy rain the next day marked the end of my Shrimper Week 2010 and, having slipped the boat out at the shallowest slipway I could possibly find, I began the slow road trip back to Devon. The first 60 miles being eventful as the road weaved its way down the side of Loch Lomond. Don't worry about the logging lorries coming the other way – it is the rented motorhomes!

Overall it was an excellent week sailing, in superb surroundings that have much to recommend them and with very friendly company. Looking forward to Holland already (PS it is closer than Scotland!).



Trailer Road Test



Lois sailing in February



Masts in Rothesay



Loch Gilp looking south from Ardrishaig



Overnight at Ardrishaig



Wendy and Ian joined by Colin for the first lock up



Shrimpers and Crabber in canal convoy



View from Crinan Canal towards Jura



Sunset over Jura from Crinan