

International Shrimper Week 2003 (“Dutch John’s narrative”)

While working on this narrative, a new Yachting Monthly comes in and I realise that JDS has passed away. With deep respect I wish to express to all my Shrimper friends how grateful I am for this wonderful and unique personality’s writings. My thinking and actions with regard to sailing, including, probably, my choosing the Shrimper, are strongly influenced by him. For those who do not know what I’m talking about: do try and find, read and reread, J D Sleightholme’s works. It will give you much joy & practical wisdom.

Many days of mental and physical preparations precede the long haul to Poole. Much “home routine” needs attention also, so concentrating on Shrimperweek is difficult. “Waterman” is on the trailer alongside the garage. VHF still not working. To lighten the trailer I decide to load just about everything in the car.

20th June.

Dep. about 11hrs. Very smooth ride and arrive Hoek van Holland. < 1300. Soon, two other Shrimpers visible in row behind me. Secure cabin o/b ferry and find Ronald/Emily, Harry, Franke & Jasper in the lounge. Join them for lunch. Jasper was to crew for Herman. But news about Herman is scarce and not hopeful. He seems to be stuck in Dover. Retire for afternoon nap, a very good treat. Smooth sea. Join the crowd again for an early dinner and prepare for debarkation on time. No controls or checks whatsoever. Form column of three and end up in a forbidden industrial area. Everybody makes a U-turn of sorts and now we are on the way. After a couple of miles the mobile rings, those driving behind worry about the wild gyrations of my VHF antenna. This thing has not produced one word yet, but some of my children were adamant that I should have one installed before going abroad. We fix the antenna as the matron of the ward would secure a troublemaking patient and continue. Ronald & Emily drive and navigate in style and around 2200 we arrive at a motel. When I try to park the combination nearer to the room loud noises from Harry and Franke halt me, just before puncturing the monumental entrance of the motel with my protruding spars. What joy and confidence it gives to drive in company with these ever alert “Shrimpersailors”.

21st June.

Nobody seems to be in a hurry. After a healthy breakfast on the road again. “Waterman” in the middle of the column, “Pintail” in the lead and the gang from Friesland guard the rear. Takes more time than calculated; heavy traffic, coffeebreak etc. Nearing Poole we split up. “Pintail” and “Waterman” find the RMYC after only a minor detour, thanks to Trevor’s precise routing info. “Moby Dick” drives on to Poole.



Getting the boats into the water is quite an undertaking as it needs at least three persons to man the tractor and the chains. This way of Shrimperlaunching is apparently not a regular routine in Poole. Jack and Karen kindly giving a helping hand. Only one hour to go to dinner, the boat has to be rigged and everything must be stowed on board as the cars will be parked a long way off. Ronald and Emily take both cars and trailers to the parking lot

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at the other end of the bay and Barry sails the “Pintail” there. “Waterman” is graciously allowed to stay the night at the RMYC to allow the single handed sailor to get organised. The welcome dinner follows in a jolly and glorious environment. Fantastic view over the bay where the sun is setting amongst monumental cloud formations. Hundreds of boats, a great number of Shrimpers among them, bob at their moorings.

Many friends from yesteryears Shrimper activities meet again and the atmosphere bubbles with high hopes and promises for a great cruise. Ronald stands up to express our pleasure and thanks to be here, illustrated by a story with a warning: “think twice where to hold one’s towel in a unisex washroom”. The logic of this passed me by until later, when indeed the unisex washrooms became a reality. Trevor the organiser and Barry from ‘head office’ give briefings and most generous welcomes. The beautifully engraved glasses came as a big surprise. THANKS VERY MUCH AGAIN ! In rain and thunder everyone goes his way, nursing high hopes for the morrows. 25 vessels are on the list, only Herman (the true sailor) is missing the roll call. He is remembered with admiration and there are many good wishes for his speedy transit. The weather forecast however fails to give much hope as the winds will stay westerly and he is a long way east from Poole.

22 June

Rain, thunder and wife’s birthd ay, so I quickly send an SMS. She never got it. Painfully aware of too many “things”on board. Luckily I can leave a heap in a hidden corner of the RMYC. But then the Shrimperbuilder plays me trick: when stowing beercans under the bunk they happily roll forward around the corner, completely out of reach! We were to assemble at nine on the other end of the bay in Dolphin Haven, but I do not see other participants making haste. Radiocheck with “Saucy Ann” finally proves that the VHF is working after all. They advise me to take “a cabin” in the RMYC for the next night. The staff there showed some reluctance about that, but naming my own (Royal) club changed their attitude 180 degrees. Little did I then know what more was needed. About noon I cast off and find the Dutchmen and Freddie still alongside in Dolphin Haven. I join them for a walk and a pub lunch.

The weather slowly improves and eventually we are right on time for a “raft up”, a photo session, somewhere farther up in the bay. Gradually more Shrimpers arrive. Tony is very busy bringing out anchors. Soon the tidal current changes direction, causing some bends in an otherwise perfect straight line. Freddie and the Dutchmen are right in the middle and when more and more



Shrimpers raft up on the outsides we start getting a bout of claustrophobia. Why do we have to be right in the centre? I am afraid it has something to do with our activities exactly 336 years ago at Chatham. Our British friends probably want to make sure that we can not play tricks this time.....!

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Menacing clouds billow in from the West, but everybody is given time enough to untangle and run for cover. I go back to the RMYC, make some dinner and continue to get organised, waiting for the rain to stop. About 2200hrs I can not wait any longer. A quick run to the clubhouse... This is covered in complete darkness and deluging rain. What is more, it is impregnable because all the doors are solidly locked. I nearly feel sorry for myself. A French Navy’s officers hotel played that trick on me a good 20 years ago in Lorient, coming from a formal dinner and dressed accordingly. That time, with more luck than caution, I climbed a wall, trying windows until I found one that could be opened from outside. Wisely I did not try to do this again. A small lighted window could be seen high up in the very wet expanse. Prolonged shouting “Ahoy up there!!” finally woke Mike (“Saucy Ann”) from his early slumber. Hardly dressed, he negotiated dark corridors and locked doors to let me in. Mike should get a medal for that. Thank goodness, the key to my room was exactly where it was supposed to be.

23 June.

Glorious morning after a very good night’s sleep. Make myself breakfast. Karen shows up and invites me to follow “Claire” for a pleasant short sail to Studland Bay where the fleet anchors together very close to the shore. A short walk to the pub where Barry welcomes us with a number of well filled glasses of beer. What



a reception. Good show. The view from the pub lawn is magnificent and our attention is brought to the protruding Hengistbury Head in the far distance, our next point to aim for. Franke kindly offers to crew with me for the anchors up race to Christchurch. Karen clings



to her shroud waving the flag for the start. But who actually had his anchor down there? Having it down was one thing but holding was another, as a layer of kelp prevented anchors from digging in. However soon everybody was on the way. Two or three were immediately so far in the lead that we could not make out their secret. We had the pleasure of passing

Freddie and generally making good progress with the tide and a light following wind. We moored up in numbers at Christchurch S.C. and had a delicious and jolly dinner in their hospitable clubhouse.

24 June.

Some of us had their biological clock synchronised to the promised opening time of the

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clubhouse. Alas! During the night this opening time shifted, so next morning one could see quite a few “stiff moving, despondent looking, sailors” on the quay. Nonetheless, another glorious day. Some personal sightseeing, and happy encounters in the local supermarket, where the best food for the BBQ is soon sold out (to Shrimpers with huge appetites). Sheila buys the last two corn on the cob and promises me one, “because Claud does not like it anyway”. Was that true Claud? Or was it just too kind?

We leave this pleasant town around 1300, warned that there are places en route where even Shrimpers “should not dare” (Jeffrey Archer?). Soon we saw proof of this as we all glided down-river, passing and waving to Freddie and Uilly



who had left a little earlier but had to stay a little longer ... with their jib a flying (o r a drying)?....After a pleasant sail, with a spectacular rounding of Hurst Castle, Keyhaven is reached around 1600 . Not all of us find place on the quay, but I am allowed alongside “Scalawag”, where Sheila has the kettle already on . After the heat of the day the clubhouse and BBQ feel a little windy. What a nice place it is. Soon all the goodies bought for the BBQ in the morning, are duly roasted, toasted, burned, charred..and devoured, quite amazing. Ronald and I take a walk to the shingle spit and discuss its origin. Is it natural, man made or both? We decide that man must have helped a bit.

25 June.

Awake rather late, a hurried breakfast and off we go. Wind is now in the NE and freshening. About 2 hours later and we are in Lymington with endless rows of moorings, marinas and consequently, people. A little sightseeing and I am honoured to have a sandwich lunch on the dockside between two charming crewmembers, Rosemary and Sally. After that we continue, trusting the floodtide will bring us to the Beaulieu River in no time. The freshening wind against the flood gives “Waterman” her first impression of the “Solent Chop”. The boat awakens and starts behaving like a young mare. I do not like the setting of the mainsail however and try to get more tension on the forward reefingline. Bang...., the line comes loose and an un-programmed salto into the cockpit results. Some luck and my old fashioned lifevest saved me from serious damage. Soon I get the knack of how to make progress against this seastate and reach the entrance of the Baulieu River. Then it is gliding through a serene and lovely landscape under a warm and kindly evening sun. Gins Farm jetty feels a little exposed in the N-Easterly, but the wind dies. Very nourishing dinner in the clubhouse of the RSYC. Good mood everywhere and of course some speeches again. Sorry chaps, sleep crept into the system and I forgot most of your kind words. Clifford kindly telephones his B&B and indeed they have an unoccupied room.

Telephone Ernest, nephew and prospective crewmember, who reluctantly has to stay and wait for his luggage at Southampton Airport. I advise him to try Cowes tomorrow.

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26 June.

A very good night’s sleep and a superb breakfast. Quite a few boats have sailed upriver to Bucklers Hard and had a good lunch there. The Motor museum was also visited and Harry



was kindly taken to Poole to fetch his car and trailer. Sky a little overcast

For me, cleaning and reorganising the boat takes care of rest of the morning. Around 1300 the ebb-tide takes us back to the Solent where after a smooth, albeit slow, sail Cowes is

reached. Ernest is duly spotted on the jetty of a marina. So finally “Waterman” has a full complement. There follows a long glide up the river Medina with some help from the motor. Newport looms in the distance and real leading lights start to glimmer. The water rises slowly allowing us to reach the old town that has seen better days. “Moby Dick” comes alongside. She will ground on a steep sloping riverbed in the middle of the night. Harry tried to continue to sleep in an awkward position. Next morning no proof of this, but clearly his ropes are OK ! Franke has gone home as there is no hope that Herman will make it in time and besides, his daughter’s graduation calls for father’s presence.

27 June.

Late in the morning we glide back to Cowes to get some stores etc. Poking the nose outside, a sudden westerly breeze with rain catches us a little unprepared. We take in a reef and sail free of the many fast moving racing yachts. Karen warned us to be at Yarmouth before 1600. As this did not seem to happen we reluctantly motorsailed some part of the way. This proves to be unnecessary, as we gradually become aware that Harry, very seaman like uses wind and current alone, reaching Yarmouth about the same time as us. Weather improves considerably and in the warm evening sunlight Yarmouth looks its best. Karen has arranged very pleasant moorings, better and cheaper than the marina could provide . Great ‘End of Cruise (first part) Dinner’ in the RSYC. Indeed a superbly located clubhouse. Ernest moves around as if he has been Shrimpering for years. Speeches galore and some well earned trophies awarded, congratulations to Ian and Freddy. We cheer Trevor & Karen for their splendid work to realise this Shrimperweek. Finally an enthusiastic brainwashing byfrom Wales, raises high expectations for the International Shrimper week next year!!

Thank you very much Shrimperfolks from Poole and your friends and relations from Christchurch to Chichester for all you did to make this cruise such a success. You have been great hosts to us in your yachtsmen’s paradise. Thank you crews of “Moby Dick” and “Pintail II” for the help and encouragement on the road. Finally thanks to all those International Shrimperweek Crews for the friendship and the little things that made this single hander’s day. John de Kantor “Gannet of Hayling” (567)