

Cornish Shrimpers visit the Isle of Bute June 2010

At the beginning of June, thirty four Cornish Shrimpers and their crews navigated forth from all parts of Britain and from Holland, Germany and Italy.

Shrimpers "Tarrock" 479 and "Gamba" 218 began their almost 500 mile tow northwards from the R. Lym.YC., taking two days to reach the rendezvous on Saturday 12 June.

As we left Lymington the weather was sunny and warm. "Tarrock" behaved beautifully as she trundled up the motorways from Cadnam to Glasgow. Lorries and cars became fewer and fewer the further north we went. We rested overnight outside Kendal. In the morning Shap Fell looked like a challenge but she took the incline in her stride and the scenery was stunning. We began to anticipate seeing other Shrimpers on the road and soon we had a convoy of four but we became separated again.

We approached Glasgow with trepidation. What if we took a wrong turn and had to negotiate "Tarrock" through the centre of the city! All was well and we were transported over the city on an excellent dual carriage way and soon found our way to Kip Marina. Inverkip is situated on the southern bank of the Clyde about 40 miles west of Glasgow.

"Gamba's" skipper had made advance arrangements for a mass Shrimper lift in. We have never seen so many boats craned in so quickly and efficiently. No sooner had we put our masts up and we were on the water. The staff could not have been more friendly and helpful. We were issued with our Scottish courtesy flag, given a chart and told to sail for two and half hours, turn right at the lighthouse and do not enter the harbour until you see the red lights turn to green! My mate is colour blind but that is another story!

Our base for the week was the port of Rothesay, on the Isle of Bute. Negotiating a new harbour for the first time is always exciting and this one was interesting. The only real hazard was the very large car ferry which transports everything from the mainland to Bute. Once in the outer harbour we had to wait for more red lights to turn green, the footbridge was raised and in we went. Half of the inner harbour had been set aside for the Shrimper fleet. We were situated right in the centre of the town. Facilities were new but we were encouraged to visit the beautifully restored Victorian lavatories!

Rothesay is a former Victorian holiday town. The Glaswegians used to escape from the city, sail down the Clyde on the paddle steamers and holiday on Bute. There are many lovely Victorian villas around the bay. Some sadly run down but the town seems to be reviving after some years in the doldrums.

The Shrimpers made an impressive sight as we sallied forth each day. The man operating the footbridge will have had a very quiet time since we left! We soon featured in the local newspaper and many an old Scottish seadog would wander down for a nautical natter.

Some Shrimper crews opted for staying in an apartment (in case of terrible weather) but the majority slept aboard. In fact we had the most perfect June weather, warm sun, light winds and long days.

Each morning we attended the 9am Briefing and options for the day were discussed. We made interesting visits to bays and harbours around the island. One day we sailed to Kerrycroy and went ashore to visit Mount Stuart, the Marquis of Bute's Victorian Gothic mansion. It was so hot that day that it was a relief to be inside the marble halls!

After a beach barbecue at Kerrycroy, the Italian Shrimper's crew were presented with the award for navigation, having towed "Nordica" 660 from Milan, across France, missed their Channel crossing and arrived late on Bute and having to return home after only four days on the island! We had a special sail back to Rothesay that evening at 10.30pm with the sun setting behind the mountains and the sound of bagpipes in the distance.

Another day some of the fit and intrepid Shrimper crews chose to sail to the island of Great Cumbraie, leap onto bicycles and ride around the island! I'm afraid that we opted for the local bus round Bute and found ourselves in what appeared to be the ghostly village of Kilchattan. We are not sure where everyone was, even the hotel was deserted although the lights were on and the music was playing! No food there then but we did find a lovely country pub at Kingarth.

We made another memorable voyage to pretty Port Bannatyne. The Russian Restaurant had been highly recommended. Sadly the owner had decided not to open that day! Life is a bit like that on Bute.

One day was set aside for racing. Eleven Shrimpers participated in frustratingly light winds. Some competitors are pretty keen, you can tell by the glint in their eyes!

Our most memorable visit of the week would be to the most beautiful anchorage at Caladh. A sail up the East Kyle, another right turn at a very tiny lighthouse and snuggle in behind a small rocky rhododendron covered island glowing pink in the evening light. Here we barbecued ashore and stayed overnight. Even the midges were friendly and the water was so calm and clear that we could see our anchors.

On our last evening we had dinner at a grand hotel overlooking the bay. Prizes were presented for the racing event. A special trophy was given to a Shrimper from Holland. She had been trailed and sailed singlehanded by a delightful elderly Dutchman. Shrimpers cater for all ages and at the other end of the scale, George, the young son of our organiser, received an award for ferrying crews ashore at various locations. Speeches of thanks were made to those who had arranged the weather and such a lovely week of cruising.

We will certainly be returning to discover more of this beautiful cruising area but next year I think the Shrimpers are going Dutch!



Departing Rothesay



Kerrycroy anchorage



Lighthouse Caladh



Caladh anchorage



Rafted up at Caladh



Barbecue at Caladh

