

Solent Cruise Week or The Parrot Affair by Sarah Brown

From points east and west the Shrimpers made their way through rain and misty murk to gather in Hythe Marina for – a barbecue?! Well, it was the last day of August and still officially summer. The wind whistled round the spiral lookout earmarked for cooking, which made lighting the coals problematic until Paul produced some liquid lighting fuel that nearly set fire to Robin's new oilies.



A glass of red wine always engenders the Dunkirk spirit, old friends were greeted, new acquaintances made and the cruise in company officially started. Sadly, for *Tixall 2* it also ended as we waved Richard and Sheila off on Tuesday morning early as they had other commitments during the week.

A run down Southampton water to Ashlett Creek for lunch gave us the chance to visit the old mill (they really should put up warning signs about low beams and heads) and explore a new destination. Round the corner into the Beaulieu River – a motor into the wind for us but others were braver. Rafting up on the pontoons at Gins Farm went successfully, and a parking prize should be awarded to the Framptons as they reversed *Noggin the Nog* into a narrow berth with sluicing following tide.



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A delicious meal was served at the Royal Southampton Yacht Club, where the staff looked after us exceptionally well.

Day 3 and destination Gosport. A few other Shrimpers left us to point westward home - *Tarrock*, *Jackdaw* and *Magic* making for Lymington, *Little Egret* returning to the Hamble. The remainder made their way to the Lightship in Haslar Marina and the sun came out. Once tied up safely, despite a frequent rolling motion, it was time to make a start on a piece of artwork for the alternative cooking competition. Paper and pencils provided by Tim meant there was no excuse, and several of us took up the challenge.

We foregathered in the Lightship for another excellent meal and a view of a wonderful rainbow arching down into Portsmouth. Tim and Ruth were thanked for their hard work and excellent organisation on our behalf by Julia Slatter (*Birdsong*) and presented with a bottle of bubbly each.

Day 4 dawned, grey but still no rain. The fleet was further reduced as *Birdsong*, *Guillemette* and *Triplet* departed for home ports. The rest of us made for Wootton Creek.



Question: What will the departing Wightlink ferry do when confronted by a Shrimper fleet all making for the channel? Answer: Pursue a helpful course and pass to the

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south – whew! It was surprisingly crowded on the pontoons at the Royal Victoria YC, but with help from Peter Trowill (*Sequel*) we all found a space and made for the club, which is used to hungry and thirsty Shrimpers arriving en masse – albeit usually in January and via the ferry.

When the tide turned to give us extra speed into Cowes we departed and made for the Medina River, *La Mouette* continuing back to her home port in Lymington. The sun came out and a gentle run with the tide took us up river past The Folly Inn and we locked into the new Island Harbour Marina.

The brand new washing facilities and peace and quiet of the moorings were much admired. As we gathered on *Sequel* for drinks and the announcement of the art competition winner, we were surrounded by ducks, swans and jumping fish.

Fran, our art expert, had given each entry a rigorous appraisal and her final decision gave the prize to...me! No one could have been more surprised and delighted to receive a model parrot (excellent for fancy dress pirate parties) and more quickly brought back to earth by the announcement that I now had to write the cruise report for the Shrimper mag.

It was an excellent final cruise for 2015, with an average of 13 boats. Many thanks to Tim and Ruth. We needed no reefs and there was no rain after Monday. Flush with my success, I am off to purchase paper, paint and pencils. I just need to find a suitable perch for my parrot.

Sarah Brown - *SweetPea* (992)

Participating Shrimpers: *Adagio, Birdsong, Buster, Guillemette, Jackdaw, Kittiwake, Kune Kune, La Mouette, Little Egret, Noggin the Nog, Magic, Sequel, Suzette, SweetPea, Tarrock, Tixall 2, Triplet.*

