

One of the highlights of my sailing year is undoubtedly the Yarmouth Old Gaffers Festival on the Isle of Wight. This usually takes place at the beginning of June. I have attended the last 3 years events with my two sons. During the Festival, Yarmouth's picturesque harbour is filled with life and colour with more than 100 visiting traditional sailing, steam and motor vessels, including the cream of the Old Gaffers fleet and generally no more than about half a dozen Shrimpers. Staunch attendees include *Saucy Ann II* (705) and *Outrigger* (676). It would be good to see more of the SOA in attendance.

On shore there is a huge range of attractions keeping the thousands of visitors entertained from morning till night all weekend. It always puts a huge smile on Fyns' face when he sees the enormous inflatable bouncy castle of the funfair as we approach.

On the water the Festival Old Gaffers race is held on the Saturday, and on Sunday morning the Royal Solent Yacht Club has the Queens Jubilee Race.



It has become common practise for me now to depart for Yarmouth on the Thursday before and anchor overnight in Newtown Creek.

I prefer to take in the peace and quiet prior to 3 days of hustle and bustle in Yarmouth Harbour. This year was slightly different in that the Gaffers race had to be brought forward to the Friday as the Round the Island race was taking part on Saturday.

We left Newtown Creek after breakfast and made our way westwards to Yarmouth, arriving in plenty of time to register and collect our race instructions. The race was interesting and exciting not only because of the favourable weather but also due to the vast array of boats taking place, both large and small. Not really knowing who we were competing against we did our best in maintaining

good speed and just concentrated on getting around the course. To our delight we were the first Shrimper home and came a commendable 6<sup>th</sup> in our class and 14<sup>th</sup> overall.

We made our way back to secure our berth for the next two days. The atmosphere within the harbour was fantastic. Fyn soon paddled off in the dinghy to seek out friends from last year.

On Saturday we took full advantage of Yarmouth being a good view point for the Round the Island Race. We packed up our lunch and walked to Sconce Point and picnicked on the beach to watch hundreds of yachts with spinnakers flying, effectively going nowhere as the tide had turned. In the afternoon we strolled round the town taking in the French Market, Vintage Cars, Ferret racing, street entertainers and funfair.

Saturday evening we attend the party in the marquee on the quay and were entertained by variety of acts and bands. The evening was rounded off as night fell with an astonishing firework display. We returned to Beaulieu on Sunday after a perfect sail back with wind and tide, already looking forward to 2007.

This years festival celebrates The Treasures of the Isle of Wight. For more information visit:

<http://www.yarmouth-harbour.co.uk/yogaff/index.htm>

See you there !



**Steve Mitchell** *Spray (19)*