

Solent Mini Cruise – September 2012

3RD September

My friend Bill seems to have developed a keen interest in visiting historic properties and gardens. When we were in Falmouth there was no question that we had to visit Trelissic Gardens and Trerice and I think he might have been eyeing the prospects on the Isle of Wight when he agreed to join me (*on Triplet 815*) for another potentially hazardous expedition to the Solent. Once again we had to leave Poole at some ghastly hour, this time to get through Hurst and on up to Cowes before the turn of the tide. We managed to achieve this with a fair wind and sunshine all the way, and then drifted around in the Medina for a while. When we took a look at Shepards Wharf there was a big notice which said 'Reserved for Shrimper Rally' so we tied up and went ashore. Over the course of the afternoon about fifteen more Shrimpers arrived and moored up in good order, with all the usual chat and bonhomie of a Shrimper event. In the evening we all repaired to the Island Sailing Club for drinks on the balcony and supper. While we were there I did notice Bill paying particular attention when someone mentioned that Osborne House is not very far from Cowes.



Shepards Wharf

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4th September

Sure enough, the morning saw two bleary eyed sailors on the chain ferry, heading for East Cowes and on up the hill to take in the Victorian splendour of the Great Queen's holiday home. We did the whole thing – house, garden, beach, Swiss Cottage – everything, then down the hill again to the boat. After lunch the assembled fleet took a fair tide down to Yarmouth. Robin Wearn (*La Mouette 379*) firmly established his green credentials by sailing from Shepards Wharf to his pontoon berth in Yarmouth without a single toxic emission from his outboard. As usual Bill and I were nearly the last to arrive and *Triplet* was assigned a berth shoehorned into a corner behind an enormous motor cruiser. Moored stern-to on the other side of our pontoon there were two very large sailing cruisers labelled 'Ellen MacArthur Trust' and lots of cheerful young people wheeling and walking up and down. Later in the evening we had a very good supper at the Royal Solent and turned in.

At dawn I was woken up by a great roar of wind from the East and the sound of the gunwale crunching heavily on the pontoon, so I was quickly out in my night attire grappling with warps and fenders. The enormous cruiser had shifted backwards, so I had to pull *Triplet* clear of the stern-hung dinghy which was bearing down on our shrouds. Later in the morning we set off for Beaulieu.

Getting away from the pontoon into the wind required a little thought. In the end we discovered that the best way was to swing out in reverse with someone heaving on the bowsprit from the pontoon. We did this in turn under the watchful eye of Dame Ellen who was taking coffee in the cockpit of one of the cruisers. Bill and I were the last to go so we were very grateful when two of her companions rushed over to help us off.

Half way between Bucklers Hard and Beaulieu Pool I managed to get the throat halyard jam-turned onto the winch. I have never done this before and it took a while to get it sorted out. Eventually we made it to the Pool where the others were enjoying a peaceful time at anchor. I have passed this bit of water many times by road. At low tide it is a mass of lumpy mud and deep channels.

While we were there I noticed that one of our skippers, who had left Yarmouth single-handed, now had a mystery lady passenger on board. I was surprised because there had been no scheduled stops on the way. I put it down to a miracle of modern communications. After a while the tide started to go out, so we all floated down to Bucklers Hard and rafted up on the tripper boat pontoon. We had a look at the historic shipyard, then it was time for tea on board.

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As I sat in the cockpit enjoying the peace of the river, I was suddenly aware of a pair of sandals next me on the pontoon, then a long pair of brown legs and some very short shorts. They belonged to someone who could easily have been taking a break from a Vogue photo shoot. She addressed me in slightly halting English and asked where she could find a ‘tree for toe mass’. Sighing inwardly, I directed her to one of the Shrimpers further along the pontoon. By this time the other mystery lady had disappeared. Most of us had supper at the Master Builders, followed by a quiet night on the river.



The Master Builders

5th September

A somewhat reduced fleet set off for Wooton Creek. For some unknown reason *Triplet* was in front for a while, but we had to do a holding manoeuvre to avoid an unplanned encounter with the high speed ferry heading for Cowes. After that we all drifted along in the sunshine, past Osborne Bay, into the creek and up as far as the bridge. We soon found that there is nowhere to land up there, so we rafted up

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at anchor for a while, then went on down to the yacht club pontoon. The Royal Victoria is a very friendly club and they gave us an excellent supper.



Royal Victoria Y C



Quarr Abbey

6th September

It was time for us all to head for our home ports, but those of us who wanted to go westwards had to wait until the middle of the day before the tide started to run in our favour. We were moored up next to Robin and Pam Wearn. They know the area well and they asked if we would like to join them on a walk to Quarr Abbey which is quite near. Well, there was no question about whether we would go – and in no time we were off. It is well worth a visit. The original abbey was founded in 1132 by the Cistercian Order and was originally surrounded by a defensive wall. A few interesting bits remain but most of the stone was carted off by Henry VIII to build coastal forts. The new Benedictine abbey was started in the early 1900s and is still in use today. Visitors can go inside one of the chapels and there is a tearoom in the garden where we enjoyed some very good cakes and cookies.

Our sail home was OK but not brilliant. We had a fair tide to start with, but wind on the nose all the way. In the middle of Poole Bay it died, so we had to motor the rest. Getting into Poole Harbour in the dark is always a little disconcerting and it did not help much when one of the red lights turned out to be not a port hand buoy, but a Chinese lantern, which shot into the sky on a blast of hot air. We got in safely nevertheless, and tied up at my berth in the Parkstone Y C Haven.

Huge thanks are due to Trevor T for very well organised cruise.

Mike Shearman and Bill Anderson.

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