

THE SCOTTISH SHRIMPER RALLY 12-19 JULY 1997

It was precisely a year ago that the Shrimpers met in Brest for an extravaganza of sailing in the warm waters of western France. Bon amie prevailed throughout and any suggestion of a follow-up expedition would be well received by the more mobile and adventurous members of the Association. And so it was that the Shrimpers met in the Kyle of Lochalsh at Skye in Scotland under the direction of Martin Howard who was familiar with the coastline.

Martin had prepared an itinerary which would take seven Shrimpers around the shores and islands of the Inner Sound between the mainland and the Isle of Skye.

	THE BOATS	THE SKIPPER	THE CREW
174	Golden Cloud	Colin Johnstone	Frances Johnstone
334	Tystie	Martin Howard	Sam
351	Bluechip	Leslie Hughes	Jessie Hughes
352	Misty Morn	Roger Tushingham	Lone
503	Annie The Shrimp	John Standing	Mark
549	Lady Isabella	Bryan Gullan	Robert
628	Black Swan	Peter Ward	Lone

The following log is condensed for editorial purposes, although I understand detailed logs were recorded such was the enthusiasm of the Skipper, in particular that of "Golden Cloud" and "Lady Isabella".

FRIDAY 11 JULY

The evening saw the arrival of the Shrimpers from most parts of the British Isles, more notably "Black Swan" was trailed from Poole overnight while two Shrimpers "Lady Isabella" and "Bluechip" had travelled by ferry across the Irish Sea from the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland. "Golden Cloud" had made by all accounts, an adventurous two day sea passage from Loch Linnhe via Tobermory.

By late evening most of the Shrimpers had assembled in preparation for the cruise with the certain knowledge that the settled warm weather currently enjoyed by Scotland would continue.

SATURDAY 12 JULY

By mid morning all boats had been launched and trailers and vehicles conveniently stowed at the harbour master's yard adjacent to the slipway for the former Skye ferry. With a growing expectancy, the Shrimpers were underway

with full sail, cameras clickings as the graceful Skye Bridge towered over the route to Plockton some 8 miles North East along a craggy coast which was to be typical of the shorelines in this area.

That evening set a pattern of party dinners ashore in pleasant restaurants although the opportunities grew somewhat fewer as the cruise developed. Mistakes were inevitable as skippers and crew acclimatised themselves to marine life - "Bluechip" for example, apparently tied its dingy to a ring 4 foot below high water - (my thanks to Peter Ward for his later night dive although I suspect he didn't feel a thing!) It is also fair to say that we all learned from Peter how to hold an anchor in kelp overnight!

SUNDAY 13 JULY

At noon the Shrimpers made an attractive spectacle as they sailed quietly out of Plockton, a popular port which they would eventually return to at the end of the rally. The destination was the Crowlin Islands some 9 miles west in outer Lough Carron. A snug anchorage protected the fleet from a force 4 which blew from the prevailing South. Some boats returned for the night to Plockton to drop off the Dutch couple who were renewing acquaintances and had joined Martin for a day's sailing.

MONDAY 14 JULY

The seven Shrimpers regrouped early in the morning and raced north under a freshening southerly breeze reaching 5 knots over a sustained period of 5 hours - an exhilarating experience for the skippers and their crew. The destination was Shieldaig a remote village with one shop and a small hotel with a welcome opportunity to shower. Roger Tushingham encouraged a crew to join him in a late night visit to the Torridon Hotel in Upper Loch Torridon. Total darkness and lack of water saw them return 3 hours later mission unaccomplished - never mind, his well appointed Shrimper hosted a candlelight party - while Peter slept in the cockpit, all the way home!

TUESDAY 15 JULY

An early start, alas, was necessary to ensure the completion of a 17 mile passage to the west side of the Island of Rona. With cyclonic winds blowing North veering West the passage was quite eventful; boats no longer sailed in company, but distanced each other, some using engines to counter the tide while others formed a sail-all-the-way club with the result that boats found it difficult to identify the narrow creek entrance to the remote but popular anchorage of Acairseid Mhor. Facilities were limited but once again a warm shower in the Factors House was welcomed by all. Incidentally Rona is full of evidential history of early Scots settlement.

WEDNESDAY 16 JULY

The day's sailing was memorable from a number of points of view. The passage was to Portree on Skye across the Sound of Raasay some 11 miles due SW. The latter part of the journey was a real test for the Shrimpers with driving rain showers, obscure shorelines and agitated seas whipped up by a force 5/6 off the top of 1,000 foot cliffs of East Skye. Needless to say they all made it with a combination of applied seamanship and Shrimper durability. Peter took an impromptu lesson in reefing from Roger when his engine failed. I suspect the entire party were all happy to be together again to celebrate his 64th Birthday over a very enjoyable meal that evening.

THURSDAY 17 JULY

The sun shone on the Shrimpers as they weighed anchor in the calm harbour of Portree. Light winds helped the boats in a relaxed run to Churchton Bay on the SE tip of Raasay some 6 miles further sought in the Sound of Raasay. A short visit to Raasay House for a pint allowed skippers and crew to reflect upon the majestic sight of seven Shrimpers typically rafted with the backdrop of rising Munros from the calm seas.

Overnight anchorage was across the Inner Sound at the protected deepwater creek of Poll Domhain on the Applecross shore some 11 miles further West. As the boats crossed the tip of the Crowlin Islands again in a broad reach, the sun caught the tan sails against a darkening northern horizon - a pretty sight indeed.

The remote anchorages throughout the cruise enabled the Shrimpers to fully demonstrate their culinary expertise with offers of venison, exquisite tins of exotic food coupled with fresh vegetables and mature clarets from the cellar of "Black Swan".

FRIDAY 18 JULY

This was to be the last official leg of the Rally, motoring for the most part to Kishorn Island in Loch Carron a short distance from Plockton. The Shrimpers rafter up one again and enjoyed an alfresco lunch while the much appreciated "ferry men" Sam and Robert took a swim in the inviting sunny waters.

A formal dinner was planned ashore at Plockton which gave the Skippers and crew an opportunity to reflect upon the undoubted success of the Rally, express their thanks to Martin Howard for his imaginative itinerary and a hope for a further Rally next year.

LESLIE HUGHES (BLUECHIP)