

## MARY CARMICHAEL TROPHY - WINNING LOG 1999

### Lady Eleanor's (93) Passage from Newport (Pembs) to Rock July 1999 by Roy Harper

When I asked my angling friend Tony Jenner if he would crew for me on a trip from my home port Newport (near Fishguard) to Rock and then for the weeks activities, his young wife Debbie was within earshot and piped up "is this a boys' jolly or can I come?"

I was taken aback and explained that a shrimper is only a two – berth and small at that, but she simply replied "No problem – I'll sleep on the deck"

That is how my best ever Shrimpering week was born.

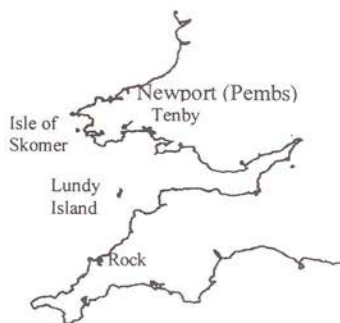
#### Day 1

We left the ancient little silted up harbour of Newport on the hostile north Pembrokeshire coast at 09.30 on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> July '99 at the top of the tide in a force 3 westerly. I yelled to my wife, standing on the old slate quay wall, "see you in Cornwall on Sunday".

The spring tide started a southerly flow 2 hours later and as we sped past Strumble Head and St David's Head, we were well in time to catch the last of the fair tide through Ramsey Sound.

Using my hand held Eagle GPS I used pre-set way points to avoid the dreaded drying Horse Rock in mid channel and the ominous fangs of rock known as 'The Bitches' stretching into the channel from the island.

For this southerly passage, we were on a beam reach in a force 4 and at one stage, my GPS showed a ground speed of 16.2 knots!



We sailed on across St Brides Bay and anchored on the South Haven of Skomer Island at 16.30hrs. My plan was to climb the rocky path from the small shingle beach and spend a couple of hours on the island viewing the bird life, sadly the wind turned a little to the south giving us a rocky lee shore. We weighed anchor, motored through Jack Sound and picked up a mooring in North Haven where we spent a bumpy night.

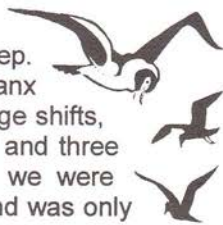
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Normally, all my shrimpering is done single handed and I have doubled the width of the port berth by glueing mahogany strips to the centre plate casing. This supports a plywood base and a foam squab cushion, which doubles as a backrest in the cabin. The ply base also doubles as a cockpit chart table when laid across the thwarts. I gallantly offered this luxurious berth to Debbie, whereupon Tony commandeered it, Debbie slept in the starboard berth and I was on deck beneath a makeshift awning!

### Day 2 Friday 16<sup>th</sup> July 1999

This is when I made my first big mistake.

I had explained to my crew that we needed to be up at 0500hrs to catch the fair tide but we all had a poor nights sleep. This was mainly due to the screaming calls of the Manx Shearwaters that nest on Skomer, and return at night to change shifts, or feed their young. It was 08.30 before we finally got away and three hours later we had only covered three miles, furthermore we were caught in the edge of 'Wild Goose Race' and although the wind was only 3 or 4 westerly we encountered 3 metre high pyramid shaped waves which gave us an uncomfortable hour. This was soon forgotten when we sailed between Skokholm and the mainland and saw our first Dolphins.



We arrived in the delightful harbour of Tenby on a sunlit evening, where Debbie volunteered to jog ashore to fetch fish and chips.

We were at peace with the world, anchored, drinking 'bilge chilled' Chardonnay when believe it or not, a seal popped his head up 10 meters astern and actually took a few chips thrown to it!

High tide that night was 21.10 hours so I sent my crew down below to bed and I took Lady Eleanor into the beach at 23.00. When she grounded I waded ashore, found some baulks of timber and propped each bilge keel as she dried out, and we spent a level peaceful night.

### Day 3 Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> July 1999

We floated off my 'dry dock' at 08.00 and with the shipping forecast giving winds W-S/W 3 to 4 occasionally 5 we hoisted full sail and made the 34 mile trip to Lundy in one tack. This was our best day, sunny and breezy. Firstly we saw a 20ft basking shark, then a large school of common dolphin which stayed alongside for about 10 minutes, before suddenly turning away and giving an acrobatic display leaping 3 metres into the air as they left us.

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We had seen many solitary Gannets searching for mackerel, which have been scarce in our waters this season, but 5 miles off Lundy we saw one dive into the sea 50 metres off our bow. As we neared it flapped away leaving a sunfish, the size of a dustbin lid, wounded and flapping on the surface.

**Shrimper No. 93**  
**Lady Eleanor's Passage**

**Day 1. Newport to Skomer**  
**Day 2. Skomer to Tenby**  
**Day 3. Tenby to Lundy**  
**Day 4. Lundy to Rock**

**A total of 142 nautical miles**  
**Averaging 4 knots**

Each day I informed the coastguard of our passage using my hand held VHF radio, but when I tried to clear my TR for that day, we were 2 miles off Lundy and I found I was out of range. We stooed around for half an hour until I picked up a commercial vessel, which kindly relayed my message to Swansea coastguard. Meanwhile Tony dropped a line overboard and promptly caught nine plump mackerel. We barbecued them over the stern on my Heath Robinson contraption, after we'd dropped the hook in 4 metres of gin clear water under the lee of the South Lundy lighthouse, for our second peaceful night.

### Day 4 Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July 1999

An anticlimax after yesterday, our course for Rock gave us the wind right on the nose. We motored for hours, and given that it was going to take longer than one tide, we had a strong foul tide for the first 3 hours. We were thankful for the autohelm on this leg; it's a Navico 200 which I fitted this spring, and it steers a straighter course than I can.

We arrived off Newland Rock at 17.00 having to counteract the tidal stream which would have the Moulds Rocks to port. I hoisted our Welsh as I hoisted the right mainsail I turned standing, right hands on chests, Welsh national anthem.



taken great care  
taken us on to  
dragon flag and  
to see my crew,  
singing the

We sailed up the Camel Estuary on a glorious summer evening and as we picked up a mooring alongside Rock Sailing Club, the Pumphrey family rowed out in their tender and whisked us ashore to the warmest of welcomes, just in time for a superb pint, as we had arrived 10 minutes before the start of the Shrimper Week's briefing meeting.