

Shrimper log 2010

Gwendoline had been trailed to Inverkip by Bryn who had spent a week sailing in the Isle of Bute area. 8th June we arrived after a day on the train, and refreshed ourselves with a pint in the local on our walk down to the boat. An excellent meal in the marina and we were ready for our adventures to start.

The next day we sailed to Largs with a fair northerly breeze and sunshine and were treated to porpoises dancing about in the water. We walked into town for a drink to meet a friend and got very cheap a taxi back. The next day 10th, we walked to Farlie to see what remained of William Fife's house and boatyard. He built many famous yachts between 1850-1930 including the one Des used to live on as a child called Almida.

10th. We left at 13.00 for the Isle of Cumbrae with a fair wind and sun, again seeing porpoises. We arrived at 15.00 and explored the lovely little town of Millport then rowed out to the small rocky island in the bay called Eilean where many seals were basking in the evening sun. We decided to take advantage of the good weather while it lasted and left Millport the next morning at 11.00 to sail to Aran. We watched this dramatic island grow before us with its high peaks appearing and disappearing into the clouds. At 15.00 we sailed into Lamlash harbour with gannets diving into the sea in front of us. Walking on the island before the evening pub and meal, we were surprised at the large number of cars, most of which were large people carriers!



The wind had been forecast to back SW but the next morning 12th, it was still NW and strong. We motored out to see what it was like and spent a while banging into the seas while making precious little progress. We decided to go back and take a bus trip round the island and see if the wind shifted later. The bus took 2 hours to make the circuit, but was interesting. We were dismayed that the wind had still not changed, and resigned ourselves to missing the welcome drinks party with the Shrimpers for the start of Shrimper week, and had a pub meal looking across to Holy Island.



13th June, 04.15 wind had gone SW but very light so set off for Rothsey under motor, arriving 09.00 to join the Shrimpers in the inner harbour as the 31st boat, and a day of rest, for us. We were happy to explore the town of Rothsay. The next day we left at 09.30 for the Kyles of Bute the wind N2. We motored through the Kyles and continued as far as we could into Loch Riddon where we stopped for lunch. It was a beautiful



day and as we sailed south the other boats were arriving for their barbecue in an idyllic spot. We could not resist carrying on, after all we were aware this was Scotland, the weather might change at any time. A quick survey of the chart and Tarbert looked a nice sail away and we decided to explore further afield. It was a



perfect day, we sailed across Loch Fyne having the entire sea to ourselves and always the spectacular views of Aran. We approached the small harbour and were enchanted with its beauty, a rocky islet guarding the entrance leading to a deep inlet with the town curving round the end.



The sun was hot and we had a lovely evening ashore eating local sea food.

The next day, 15th we walked across the peninsular to West Tarbert Loch and then looked round the town and rowed out to the rocky islet, in the evening we walked up to the castle ruins. At 04.30am the next day,



was unusually grey with no wind so we motored to the south of Inchmarnoch island from there we sailed to Ascog and found the rest of the Shrimper fleet just arriving. I really wanted to visit a Victorian fernery so walked along the road to find the really magical garden. The fernery had been restored in the 1980s and was sunk into the ground, with a huge collection of ferns.

We then moved onto Kerrycroy to join the other 27 Shrimpers for a barbecue which we had on the harbour wall in the evening sunshine, in true Shrimper style with good wine, food and chat! We stayed there for the



night along with some other boats. The next day we set off for Millport at 09.30 in a very light northerly wind, we arrived at 11.30 and anchored off the pier. I decided to do the round the island cycle tour despite the blistering heat, the hottest day so far! I was very glad to have done it, as the views were spectacular all round,

Aran as always dominating the scene. I met some fellow Shrimpers at the café for a catch up chat. We stayed for the evening and had a "high tea" followed by local whisky in the pub, Millport was a splendid place.

17th. We bought haggis slices from the butcher, stocked up with provisions in the supermarket and set off at 10.45 for Dumbarton. I rang the lock keeper at Bowling Basin where the Forth and Clyde canal starts and found it was shut for a few days due to some repairs on a lock gate. This was unfortunate but we decided to proceed, sure we would find things to do from the basin. We dropped the key off at Kip and had showers carrying on up the Clyde. Reading the information the Clyde sounded very complicated and busy, but in reality was very quiet, not anything like Harwich! We imagined what it must have been like in the shipbuilding hey day when a new ship was launched every week, right up at the top of this narrowing river, including the Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth and QE2!



Dumbarton rock appeared, gradually growing in size, looking dramatic in the evening sun. It stands at the junction of the rivers the Clyde and Leven which is the river that flows out of Loch Lomond. We entered the narrow channel slowly passing the marina and proceeded upstream, passing a very impressive tall brick built ruin, (we



later discovered had been the distillery) to a stone bridge in the town. Spying a vacant mooring we were about to pick it up, when a man on another boat called to us. Expecting to be told "You can't stay here" as is so often the case in England, to our surprise he said "Come and lay along side me, it's safer"! We duly did and he then invited us aboard, taking some beers we went to join him. He was a retired master mariner and pilot, who had started out on the "puffers" which were steam barges, so named because unlike steam ships which recycle the steam, they let the steam up their funnel like a train, making the puffing sound. After a lot of stories we left him for our haggis slices, which were excellent.

19th. We left at 04.45 the next morning for Bowling Basin, the start of the Forth and Clyde canal which comes out at Grangemouth a few miles from Edinburgh. We were met by a very hospitable night security man who gave us guides as well as tea while we waited for the lock keeper who came on duty at 08.00. He however was not quite so friendly as I had omitted to officially book in when I rang. He was probably stressed with the canal being closed and soon came round finding us a berth in the tiny harbour mainly occupied by live-aboards. We



discovered, despite the guide inferring one could take 5 days to make the passage, that one was escorted through in convoy with whatever other boats wanted to go through, in two days and the locks were manned by British Waterways staff for you. The worst news was they didn't want us to go till Sat even though it was due to reopen on Thurs. Des went to the Denny tank in Dumbarton where they used to test the efficiency of various hull shapes for the ship building industry, only to find it was closed! We got the bus to Loch Lomond and saw the paddle steamer Maid of Loch and the restored steam slipway winch. Using our rover tickets, we decided

to evening out in Glasgow being Saturday night, and the experience was fascinating. We contemplated going home for a few days but started exploring Glasgow instead which was very interesting. On Monday a new lock keeper came on duty and we asked if there was any chance of going earlier and yes, we could go on Thursday with some other boats.

24th. The locks were much bigger and deeper than canal locks and we went through the only drop lock in the world which takes 40mins. We dropped down under a road, which had been built over the canal when it had been derelict. We had a team of 6 men manning the locks, apparently the restoration project promised it would create employment! We managed a quick glimpse of the Kelvin river from the aqueduct where the





canal went over it. Tragically 2 boys had drowned there the day before. Despite our personal army of helpers it was 19.45 when we arrived at The Stables for a welcome meal and drink, now well clear of Glasgow suburbs.

The next day was shorter, the first part being across the flat summit at 156 feet above sea level. but were whizzed past the Falkirk wheel, an amazing contraption whisking boats up into the air for the



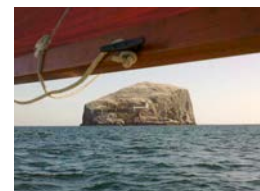
branch of the canal that goes to Edinburgh city. Grangemouth had little to recommend it and an unfortunate smell, so we decided to leave the next day. The lock keeper organised the boats so the shallow draft went first, the moment the incredibly fast rising tide showed 1 meter at the bridge. The deeper ones had to get it right with the ever decreasing head room! From the inland waters of the canal we were spat out into the swirling waters of the Forth, reminiscent of a miniature Thames. We raised the mast at the jetty of the Grangemouth Yacht Club who, in true Scottish style, were very friendly.

We tacked down stream to Port Edgar admiring the Forth bridge in the evening light. The town of Queensferry South was very buzzy with lots of restaurants and



bars, but all with big queues, no doubt with people out from Edinburgh for Saturday night, drawn by the spectacular views of the 2 bridges the town was sandwiched between. A lovely meal was found however, so all was well. Sunday was spent stocking up and visiting the museum, the weather was going to be better tomorrow.

28th. We left at 03.40, the bridges looking wonderful in the early light with the full moon shining as well. We past Edinburgh with Arthur's seat and at Inchkeith we were able to sail reaching Bass Rock by 08.45. A cloud of gannets hung over it, like a halo, the rock quite white with guano, and we started to see puffins on the water. The wind was SW 2-4 with some strong gusts which came down from the cliffs. It was sunny and we rounded St Abbs Head at 12.50, the wind coming more from the south with south east forecast, so we pushed on, motor sailing and arrived at Berwick on Tweed at 15.00. There were just 3 mooring in the harbour and luckily one was free! Going to sleep incredibly early and getting up again at 03.00 our body clocks were changing.



It rained in the night, (the only rain we ever got was at night all trip!!) and was dead calm in the morning so motored to Holy Island (Lindisfarne) for 06.00. On the way into the tiny harbour we had to make our way through loads of seals. The tide was still rising and we went alongside the little jetty, and walked round the island, quite magical in the early morning, with hundreds of small birds singing. The yellow lines gave a clue to how it might be later in the day as it is joined by a causeway to the mainland. There are the ruins of the abbey where the Lindisfarne Gospel was created as well as the castle ruins.





We left at 07.00 the wind N2. We passed the Farne islands and sailed into the tiny harbour of Sea Houses but did not stop. We passed the dramatic Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh castles. Our plan was to find our way through the tiny entrance to Boulmer and wait for the tide but the wind picked up so we carried on passing the entrance which looked pretty tricky, just a narrow crack through a rock shelf! Looking ahead Des thought he saw a super tanker, which turned out to be Cocquet Island, which was covered in sea birds. Then, for what seemed like hours, we were watching a power station grow bigger and bigger, being the only conspicuous land mark we were surprised not to see it clearly marked on the chart, we did find 2 chimneys marked but no "power station conspic"!

We sailed on, now heading for the wind turbines of Blyth where we had decided to stop, the wind dying just as we arrived at 16.00. We tucked into a pontoon berth behind the harbour walls, and set off for the town. Finding a pub before we reached it, we had a drink and decided to return to the yacht club which was housed in an old wooden light ship and looked interesting. News events followed us one of Moat's victims came from Blyth we discovered!

30th. We slept very well but the morning forecast was strong SE, however in reality there was a light NW so off we went. We passed the prominent St Mary's light (disused), Cullacoates, Tynemouth and Sunderland. We were having to motor sail, which did not help my attempts at fishing, the wind was going east but still light. However by the time we approached Hartlepool it freshened considerably SE, as forecast and the sea fog was quickly rolling in. We went into the lock and into the large marina just in time, it was thick by now and people were saying they hadn't seen the "fret" as they call it, for a long time.



We had a much needed shower and headed for the parade of restaurants and bars along the marina side which were heaving with life. The next morning,



Thurs, we visited Maritime Hartlepool which was really fascinating and very well done, the main item being a huge sailing fighting ship from 1861, which had been lovingly restored. We walked into the old town hoping for a drink but realised why the marina bars were so busy, the town was deserted, everyone drank in the marina now! Quite incredibly there was nowhere in this huge complex that sold charts! When I rang the nearest chandler out of town he was out of stock of C29 (The Wash etc) so I ordered it from Scarborough who agreed to leave it at a café for me as it would be Saturday pm when we arrived, as the weather forecast gales till Sat.

On Sat 3rd July we left marina lock at 05.15 with a fishing boat, the wind was a good W3 so made excellent speed, 7kns over ground at times. We passed the blast furnaces of Teeside, and at 09.00 we were at Staithes a small quaint harbour nestled in a cleft, Des wanted to sail in to have a look, luckily it was high tide as there was a shallow rocky ledge extending out round it! We then sailed on past Runswick Bay, Whitby and Robin Hood's Bay.



Our progress slowed as we approached Scarborough as the tide turned at 12.00 and the streams were getting ever stronger as we got further south.

We anchored in the bay to have lunch and call up to ask for a berth, but it was not relaxing with all the speed boats, and a nifty pirate ship taking trips out across the bay. Visitors are only allowed in the west harbour and there is no access at low water, so we went in as soon as we could. The female harbourmaster was amused by the Shrimper, having never seen one and thought it was very quaint but very small! Most places have a minimum length of 8 meters so you pay over the odds with our 6 meter boats, everyone seeming to believe that enormous boats are more suited to this coast! This was the most expensive place £18 per night, there is nowhere you can just anchor and the welcome shelter of harbour walls does cost. We mused on how lucky we were in the Thames estuary to be able to stop without being charged in most places, despite the proximity to London! Scarborough is a bustling holiday resort with big a sandy beach, and we explored the town for a couple of days while we waited for a low to pass over with accompanying gales.

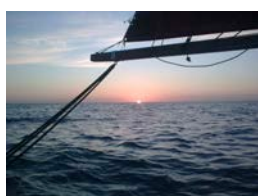


Mon 5th. Left Scarborough at 04.40 wind was light so we motored at first, passing Filey Brigg. Then the dramatic white cliffs of Flamborough Head grew bigger and as we passed there were lots of caves at the base. The wind increased



a good west 3 and we were sailing well, we passed Aldborough! We put in a reef to cross the Humber as it increased W4 passing close in along Spurn Head and crossing on the yacht track, straying however into an active DZ area! The wind freshened NW and we were on a run, so she was broaching at times as we made our way down the Lincolnshire coast through the afternoon. We passed Inner

Dowsing and at 20.00 we added the engine to make speed against the tide, we had done 7 kns with the fair tide but were struggling now as we had 10 hours of tide against us due to the strange flows round the Wash. The sea was quite big with wind against tide and Des was on the helm. I took over from 21.00 till 23.00 the tide coming fair at 22.30 and the steering now a bit easier as wind and tide were together. Des did the night watch till 03.00 and being well out at sea across the Wash the sea was again quite big. The forecast was for the wind to stay steady, which was important as there were no ports of refuge, the north Norfolk coast ports being inaccessible at night even though the tide was right. It is always reassuring when the first glimmers of light appear in the sky, and with it the wind was easing as we were gaining the shelter of the coast and by 06.15 we were in sight of Great Yarmouth. I woke Des and went to sleep myself, at 07.45 we were at Lowestoft and after Covehithe I cooked breakfast which sent Des to sleep till the Orford approaches at 14.15. We entered the river Ore at



14.40 and celebrated with beer, miraculously taking the fair tide all the way up to Snape seamlessly! We even managed to sail, the wind kindly going SE, and us proudly flying our Scottish courtesy flag! We arrived at 17.30 after a 37hr voyage sailing 187 miles. The whole trip from Grangemouth was 368 miles and we did it in exactly 2 weeks.