

Shrimping for Girls – Liz Robinson

If someone had told me this time last year that I would be the proud owner of a Shrimper, I would have been very surprised – delighted, but surprised. In October 2014 I was looking out over Plymouth Sound when I noticed a lot of gaff-rigged sails passing by. Closer inspection through binoculars revealed the insignia, which I had seen before but hadn't identified. I had an idea what they might be because my neighbour owns a 17ft Crabber, so I googled Cornish Crabbers and soon found the Shrimper. Further reading on the websites of Crabbers and the SOA convinced me that it was the boat for me. I sent an email to the SOA area secretary, but this went unanswered and then I forgot all about it.

Christmas over, I began thinking about sailing again and made a trip to the London Boat Show. I haven't been for many years and can only advise against it if you are more interested in sails than huge motors and need to travel more than a short distance to get there. Good things did come from the excursion, however. I found the Cornish Crabbers stand and they were very helpful and informative. They gave me a working email address for Liz Saudek, the SOA's Plymouth Area Secretary, and offered me a test sail with them on the Hamble in February.

This time Liz contacted me as soon as she received my email. She offered to show me her boat and to keep an eye out for anyone who might be selling one that would suit me. Meanwhile I visited Crabbers' Solent base. Unfortunately we had chosen a very stormy day for a trial, but I wasn't going to call it off if they didn't!! When I set off from Birmingham I wasn't convinced I would be going sailing that day and, sure enough, I didn't. We motored up the Hamble, being blown from side to side of the channel. At least I had been afloat in a Shrimper and I wasn't the least bit discouraged by the experience.

A few days later Liz got back to me and told me that one of my neighbours in Cornwall was looking to sell his Shrimper. The deal was done and I became the proud owner of *Barkis* (1080), a very willing little boat.

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I spent quite a few hours in the boatyard, tidying up, polishing the hull and dreaming of the launch in April and of sailing a Shrimper for the first time. David and Sue Wilson, the previous owners, were very helpful and I was delighted to find I had gained two new friends as well as a boat.



Eventually the great day came and she was afloat at Torpoint Mosquito SC. I've sailed since I was 12 years old, mainly in dinghies and windsurfers, with the occasional trip on a yacht with a friend. This was completely different! This was my boat, which I intended to sail singlehanded, and I was apprehensive. David Wilson came with me on my first trip, I think as much to reassure himself that he had sold his boat to someone who could sail, as to boost my confidence and show me the ropes. All was well but it was a short trip due to a dying wind.

Next the Shrimpers were planning a weekend away. I think Liz tailored the trip to ensure the newest recruit, an unknown quantity, couldn't get into trouble. I had a really good weekend. Four boats met in Barn Pool where we had lunch and met another Shrimper who just came to say hello. We beat up to Cawsand, running back down into the Tamar and finally up the Lynher to moor in Dandy Hole. My first sleep on *Barkis* was very exciting, but I slept like a baby knowing that the boat was safe.

The following day we set off again back down the Lynher on the tide towards Saltash. I followed Liz some of the way so that the boat was always in deep water. On reaching the Tamar we turned upstream, past Saltash, under the road bridge (I've always wanted to do that!), past the extensive moorings at Cargreen and, still under sail, reached Cotehele,

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where we planned to moor for the night. Unfortunately the wind was swirling around and my companions thought that it was likely to be rather exposed during the night, so we carried on up river to Calstock where, with some difficulty, I managed to pick up a mooring and successfully tie up.

Another peaceful night aboard *Barkis*, apart from a small panic in the middle of the night when I lost confidence in my mooring abilities and had to rush up on deck to check, only to find all the boats, including mine, in exactly the same place as when we retired. The next morning we set off up river again to Morwellham Quay before heading back downstream to our moorings and home. I was thrilled with the boat, interested to get to know my fellow Shrimper owners and looking forward to more adventure over the summer.

I am grateful for that first weekend of encouragement and advice with the PSOA, which has boosted my confidence in my single-handed Shrimper sailing abilities. Even in a summer of very mixed weather I have visited Dandy Hole again several times, spent nearly a week continuously aboard *Barkis*, visited the marina at Queen Anne's Battery, sailed to Fowey and taken a trip up the Yealm, as well as spending many happy hours just messing about getting the feel of the boat in Plymouth Sound. Not bad for a rookie Shrimper Owner in her first season!!!



Liz Robinson – *Barkis* (1080)