

A Scilly Cruise – David Mitchell and Jonathan Beard

Why is it that all good sailing trips start in the early morning? So it was that we arrived at the quay in Rock at about 0700 and were away in *Tykeki Dym*, our Shrimper 21 #26, before 08.00, pushing against the dying flood. On board were myself, my co-owner Jonathan Beard, and computer wizard crew Olly Chappell (the cruising wing of SOA Rock's racing fleet!). There was barely a breath of wind, so we motor-sailed most of the way to the Stones buoy before a short sail into St Ives.



View to St Ives from under the boom

After seven hours of sailing, the tide was out. We anchored off before putting Jon ashore to fetch fish and chips. A brief calculation led us to the view that we needed to spend the night at anchor to enable a quick getaway in the morning. We erected our new boom tent and spent the night rolling in the swell under the most beautiful starlit sky.

The next day dawned cloudless with little wind, what little there was coming from the north. We set off again under motor, passing familiar landmarks of Geevor tin mine, Cape Cornwall and then Lands End and the Longships. Midway through the traffic separation zones, we had a jolly hour with a pod of dolphins playing under the bow.

All was going so well when the autohelm failed. A quick check revealed a broken fan belt and flat batteries! Fortunately Olly had the presence of mind to stop us turning off the engine and we continued, arriving in Porth Cressa on the south side of St Mary's after eight hours.



Porth Cressa anchorage, Jonathan rowing ashore

A quick call produced Keith Buchanan in the oldest Mark1 Land Rover I have ever seen (like Washington's axe, most of it had been replaced several times over),

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and our battery was taken off for an overnight charge. Meanwhile we retired to The Mermaid for beer and fish and chips (*there is a theme developing here*). The next morning we were up and running with batteries and a new fan belt. We had sun, light breezes and gentle tides and a whole bunch of rocks to explore.

The first day achieved a circumnavigation of Gugh and St Mary's, lovely easy sailing until we wanted to turn north into Smith Sound. This stimulated an animated discussion and a lot of chart checking to ensure we had left the correct number of rocks on each side. By the time we were back in St Mary's sound, we were getting the hang of things and beginning to be bolder around the many rocks dotting the coastline.

Such activities take their toll on ageing minds so we slipped into Porth Conger, anchoring in 1.5 m of water under the Turk's Head. After a lengthy row ashore (45 seconds in the smallest inflatable for three grown men) we managed to stave off the urge for fish and chips, but not the beer! I am pleased to report that nearly the whole trip was conducted on Cornish beer.



At anchor, viewed from the TurksHead

Porth Conger is a lovely anchorage for small boats, it is mostly 0.5m to 5m deep with a flat sandy bottom and very good holding. We were able to tuck ourselves into the innermost corner, allowing about 0.5m under the boat at low water. We had to be careful to jump in gently for the morning swim if the tide was out.

Day 2 found us heading out to Tresco and New Grimsby sound. Lots more rocks and marks to navigate around in light winds provided plenty of entertainment. New Grimsby is a big-yacht mecca but they are confined to barracks except around high water, so we had the sailing to ourselves and a few small dayboats.

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Happily at anchor in 0.5m, Tresco Flats

for fluid replacement. The morning found us in knee-deep water, so we pulled *Tykeki Dym* up to the beach and gave her bottom a scrub. She looked much the better for it.



The crew hard at work

setting sun behind Round Island. St Helen's Pool was another lovely spot, with good holding and the opportunity to walk ashore and visit the old Pest hospital where sick sailors would be quarantined (until better or dead, rather than 10 days!). Apparently there are graves not just of the sick, but also their doctors here!

One fine day took us west of Bryher among the northern rocks, out to Mincarolo and in past Castle Bryher, both important landmarks for transits through the islands.

We learnt quite quickly that most of the hazards are not troublesome at high water, but some of the lines taken by the local boats still made our hair stand on end. At times we did get bolder but would then pass our previous passage at low water and blanche at the sight of multiple jagged rocks.

The night was spent on Tresco flats in very calm water after the obligatory walk to the New Inn

Olly left to return to work the next day, and Jonathan and I spent a few days pootling around St Martin's and the northern rocks. They have named nearly every rock in Scilly - Men-a-Vaur, Nut and Kittern rock being some notable waypoints in our travels.

We found more delightful anchorages, a favourite being Porth Seal on St Martin's providing splendid views of the

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The Pest hospital on St Helen's island

We anchored in Great Porth, another very secure spot with an old fishing harbour, and walked up Samson hill (not on Samson, another local naming quirk) to great views over the S and W of Scilly.



For the last few days, the weather changed and became windier.

Annie, my wife, joined us from the *Scillonian* and we had a few days of brisk sailing with a reef in, bowling along happily in 18-25 knots of wind. But the wind was gradually shifting to the west and we were approaching springs, so the time to leave was coming. Our penultimate night was spent in the New Inn, with a delicious supper (and beer).

Our final morning was spent in Tresco Abbey gardens, well worth the £15 admission as most plants were in flower. There were exotics from all over the world plus large numbers of succulents that grow only on the islands in the UK.



Norfolk Pines and Palms, Tresco Abbey gardens

A final night on the hook in Porth Cressa (fish and chips and beer again, in The Mermaid) saw us up at 0330 to catch the tide to Falmouth. The day was murky and there was little breeze, so we motor-sailed up to and past Wolf Rock. The swell pushed us into Mounts Bay, where the land disappeared for a couple of hours until the Lizard appeared.

Keeping out from the rocks in calm weather turned out to be a mistake as we were soon bounding around in the overfalls, watching a local catamaran whip round the rocks in calm water and disappear ahead of us. Our track for the day describes a circle with escape coming once we tucked in near the headland.

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The rocks off the Lizard

With a freshening westerly breeze, we had a lovely sail up past the Manacles and into Falmouth, anchoring near the Town Quay.



We rounded off the trip with a traditional British meal, curry and more beer and then spent a day pottering up the Fal to Malpas (The Heron Inn for lunch) and back. Falmouth Haven found us an overnight spot on the pontoon and we headed back to Rock on the train. The next day we returned, and brought the boat back home on the trailer, completing our travels.

In conclusion

What did we learn from our trip? It is a truth universally acknowledged that a couple of men in possession of a Shrimper 21 must be seeking adventure. The Shrimper 21 is a very well-designed boat that sleeps three men of 6 foot-plus in comfort. She sails easily in a breath of wind and is ideal for shallow-water cruising. We managed a few passages through shallow waters with less than 15 cm under the keel on one occasion. She felt safe and easily handled in 25 knots of wind (we put the first reef in at 15 kt) and bobbed like a cork in the overfalls off the Lizard. Her easily deconstructed rig allowed us to plan a passage to Falmouth confident that we could take her home on the trailer. So, we are already planning next year.

On board equipment:

1. Raymarine plotter, depth sound and log
2. Autohelm (linked to plotter)
3. Imray Leisure folio SC5603, Falmouth to Hartland Point incl. the isles of Scilly
4. West Country Cruising Companion (9th ed). Author: Mark Fishwick
5. 2m lightweight inflatable tender (3D design)

David Mitchell & Jonathan Beard - *Tykeki Dym* (21/26)

East and Northern Scilly from St Helen's Bay

