

Looking out on a wet and windy day in November the thought of sunny days with gentle winds sailing the Pembrokeshire coast in June seemed very enticing. Reality struck in early June when we received the arrival and launching information. What had we let ourselves in for?

As recent owners of a Shrimper we had much to learn about launching and trailing. We read the comprehensive information and Jenny put red rings around things like 'narrow road,' not ideal for launching unless good weather and plenty of help' We had spent a few nights on *Lollipop(1083)* previously but not ten days, so preparation was key and careful packing essential.

Thursday 19th June

We set off early with Karen's forecast of sunny days and favourable winds ringing in our ears. Not only was the boat stuffed with every provision, but the bikes, beds and hanging wardrobe were in the van for Jenny's 'just in case.' Pinging from the What's App group alerted us to the fact that a competition had already started as to who had the longest journey. Jenny tracked progress and was sorry to hear of *Coffee Bean's* transport failure on route. Crossing the impressive Cleddau Bridge gave us a bird's eye view of Neyland Marina and entering the town they had even put the flags out for us! *Neyland Marina with Milford Haven beyond*



Driving towards the shore we were met by the sight of *Cameron (940)*, *Moonfleet(920)* and *Alice Rose(417)* already sailing in sunshine with a stiff breeze. Many Shrimpers had arrived and were busy rigging in preparation for hoisting in on Friday. Building works in the marina had not gone to plan and so the new facilities were not as described online. "A good job I packed all those extra clothes," said Jenny.

I decided to launch on the rough slipway near Neyland Yacht Club, 'not ideal for launching unless good weather', but Jenny was less than enthusiastic. Rigging and raising the mast went well but we were aware that we were being watched with some amusement from the clubhouse. One NYC member, a fellow Shrimper owner, volunteered his help. It wasn't a graceful launch, more akin to that of a lifeboat! Jenny towed our trailer back to the marina saying "I can't turn round if I get stuck, I'll just leave it." I motored *Lollipop* up to the marina in desperate need of a stiff drink and a pleasant evening was spent meeting fellow Shrimpers.

Friday 20th June

Day dawned with grey skies and a stiff breeze. We found our new berth and the marina facilities, but the only shower blocks were quite a stretch of the legs away. Cat from *Samphire* (21/46) came prepared with a folding bike! Apparently, there was singing accompaniment in the ladies' showers courtesy of Chris! *Morning has broken* being the favourite.

Breakfast enjoyed and weather improving we ventured upriver with *Alice Rose*, *Moonfleet*, *Cameron* and *Boudicca* with one reef in 23 knots of gusty breeze. Returning to our new berth proved somewhat of a challenge due to most of them being occupied by motor cruisers with large protruding outboard propellers. The day improved and we enjoyed the sunshine whilst watching the hoisting proceedings. *Coffee Bean's* crew arrived undeterred and went to Aldi to stock up. Thanks to the camaraderie of the Shrimper fleet, they enjoyed the week in other boats. The day ended with the Welcome Dinner at Neyland Yacht Club. Old friends reunited and new friends welcomed.



Martin Blake SOA National Hon.Sec. welcoming the ISW fleet at Neyland Yacht Club

Saturday 21st June – Up the Cleddau

Briefing prompt at 0900 gave us sailing instructions for the day “To explore the upper reaches of the Cleddau”. In a light breeze we set off. A few were enticed to the Lawrenny Arms for an early lunch, others continued up to Haverfordwest, while *Cameron*, *Moonfleet* and *Lollipop* ventured up the Cresswell River hoping to make it to the Tide Mill.



Cameron, Moonfleet and Lollipop motor sailing into the wind up the Cresswell River

Admiring the rural landscape and varied wildlife we didn't notice '0' on the depth gauge! We almost took to the footpath at Ford Point and walking was nearly an option as *Lollipop* became firmly stuck in the mud. Lots of reverse engine and swinging on the whisker pole thankfully did the trick. *Cameron* tacked round but *Moonfleet* headed further upriver almost making the mill but she also ran aground and Robin had to war dance on the bow! We all beat a hasty retreat to Neyland on the ebbing tide, including most of the fleet tied up at the Lawrenny Arms.



Lollipop up a creek without a paddle and the fleet moored at the Lawrenny Arms

Sunday 22nd June

Awakened to angry winds and rushing tide. Even morning prayers on the pontoon were to no avail. Trips were made by car to local attractions and hostelrys, including St. David's Head and St. David's Cathedral, and many limericks were penned. Another ISW competition!

***There was an old boy with a Shrimper,
Who remarked with a moan and a whimper.
"It's too windy for me.
To go out to sea
To sit in the pub will be simpler"***

That was the worthy winner penned by Bob Whitehouse, and on that note supper was enjoyed at the Ferryboat Inn to round off a wet and windy day on the Pembrokeshire coast.

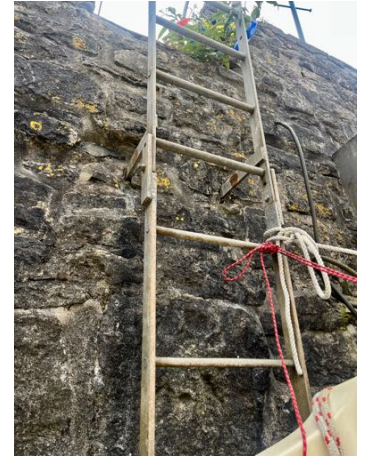
Monday 23rd June -The great expedition to Pembroke Castle Pool

A forecast of a 4-6 south-westerly in our direction of travel with a 2 knot tide against us. Challenging but most of us motored the two nautical miles to Wear Spit then reached into Crow Pool. Anchors dropped we awaited instructions to make our way up river to the tidal barrier. Timing was critical as the barrier only opened for 15 minutes. The plan, "follow the leader up the tortuous narrow creek". Jenny is particularly good on anchor duty but chose the muddiest part of Crow Pool. At least it kept her busy cleaning herself and the anchor instead of worrying about the depth.

Anchors away and follow the leader to the barrier



Pembroke Castle Pool is a tranquil haven for wildlife and locals were excited to see the appearance of a flotilla of Shrimpers decorating their dock. Mooring at the quay appeared most favourable, but with limited space we took the decision to tie up against the wall. The 10-foot ladder did not impress Jenny however mutiny is not acceptable.



Entering Pembroke Castle Pool and tying up at the dock

As there were no dockside facilities, we played hunt the public loo! Evening culinary options centred around fish and chips, while some of us had other ideas - ours was almost romantic at the Coach House. At least there was a loo! Later most met up for drinks in the Waterman Arms.

Tuesday 24th June

We awoke to a chilly morning, ready for our visit to Pembroke Castle a short walk from the dock. The enthusiasm and knowledge of our guide was exceptional and he kept us enthralled with the castle's history and its importance throughout the ages. Established by the Normans in 1093 it is one of the most impressive and formidable castles in Wales.



Our guided tour of Pembroke Castle and the statue of William Marshall

In the grounds I found a statue of one of my ancestors. William Marshall 'Europe's greatest Knight'. His son Richard Marshall (my namesake) recorded as 'a popular and unusually cultured figure.' Such fame! Lunches consumed and souvenirs purchased we prepared to depart the Castle Pool at 16.15. Again we only had 15 minutes to navigate our way out, with a few scary moments at the barrier as the incoming water pushed us all backwards. With careful manoeuvring we all made it into the creek and returned to Neyland in a brisk force 4-5 downwind.

Wednesday 25th June – Angle Bay

Our passage plan was to head west with tide and circumnavigate Thorne Island. Anchor for lunch in Angle Bay, and return on the flood. **WARNING!** We are likely to encounter large shipping. Monitor channels 16,77 and 12. Like us, *Gullemette*(554), was only able to lock onto two channels resulting in a close shave with a large pilot boat who gave five hoots and megaphone requests to keep clear of tanker about to leave!



Look out for big ships in Milford Haven

Sailing close to the island we spotted seals hauled out on the rocks. Anchorage at Angle Bay was grey and overcast but calm. Most of fleet returned to base but as we hadn't had enough excitement that day we decided to sail to Dale cardinal followed by a broad reach back with a good breeze. *Lollipop* logging 7.8 knots with tide! Didn't take long.

Thursday 26th June - Day of leisure.

Whilst others visited West Wales Heritage Museum and other places of interest, we took a bike ride upstream to Westfield Pill Nature reserve. Managed by the Wildlife Trust it boasts 150 different species of birds. Not being seasoned twitchers we only managed 7.

The evening venue at the Cresswell Arms was situated at the upper reaches of the Cresswell River. Due to our earlier encounters upstream we decided to go by car. Four intrepid boats made the journey with *Money Penny* employing Cat sitting on the bow with a physical depth log on a piece of string. They still touched bottom but this time the tide was rising. Great barbecue and cake enjoyed by all, then a quick exit by the boats to catch the last of the tide!



Boudicca and Money Penny approaching Cresswell Arms and the rally BBQ

Friday 27th June

Wind gods angry again so no passage to Skommer or Dale. Jenny was insistent on seeing puffins, so we made our way to Martins Haven to take a tourist trip around Skommer Island. The boat was about half full due to the sea state and we would be only able to see some of the island as it had to keep to the sheltered north side.

On board entertainment was supplied by Skipper Jim and 'Tonto' the herring gull. Tonto's fame has spread throughout out Wales. Tonto has accompanied Jim for the last 10 years. Lured by special treats he perches on Jim's shoulder. Tonto decided that because of the similarity of her coat, Jenny also must have treats and became extremely interested in her pockets. Jim waxed lyrical about the Skommer wildlife and the tracking of puffins on the island. See the ISW photo galley for better photographs than we could take!



Saturday 28th June - Dale

Passage today a sail down Milford Haven to Dale. Slightly grey with 3-5 south-westerly. We Sheltered in the bay for lunch and some made it onto the pontoon to eat at the Griffin. Picking up a spare mooring buoy, we became the target for swimmers. Much to their surprise they could stand when they reached us. We shared our beers (see picture) and chatted in the sunshine, then more arrived! I was curious to see the sea state off St Ann's Head, so we took a sail out. It was calming down as we returned to base on a lovely broad reach, finishing the day with supper, whisky and nostalgic music courtesy of *Coffee Bean's* cosy Air BnB.



Sunday 30th June – Homeward Bound

I motored Lollipop across the estuary and under the bridge to East Llanion Boatyard. Vance the owner had agreed to lift out boats early if it did not interfere with his round of golf!! *Miss Molly II*, *Black Shrimp* and *Eagle Owl* all joined us. De-rigging went well and we all managed to make the end of rally lunch and prize giving at the Yacht Club.

Tales were told, thank yous said, prizes given and meal enjoyed. So off we travelled back home all in one piece. New things learned and new friends made. See you in Plymouth!
Richard and Jenny



The end of rally lunch