

## **The 2006 Overnight Cruise 1** (Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> August to Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> August)

This was the first of two cruises to the Scout campsite in the Newtown estuary planned for this season. Shortly after 9am on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> August, ten people appeared at the Club hoping to set off in three Wayfarers and a Wanderer. As ever there were as many forecasts for the weekend as there were forecasters but predictions of gusts up to force 6 or 7 were common. As the wind was from the northwest you needed binoculars to see the white horses in the Solent; they were there! Two crews decided to stay at home although David Farr and Martyn Sandford put to sea in their Wanderer with the intention of sailing to Solent Breezes. They were back ashore within 10 minutes.

As there was no shortage of wind, the departure could be delayed until the tides were more favourable. At 11:10am two Wayfarers departed Hill Head. Wayfarer 3282, the Club boat, carrying a cut-down mainsail and small jib was helmed by Dave Grout and crewed by John O'Neill. Wayfarer 9153 carrying a full mainsail and a genoa, had Peter Cox on the helm and was crewed by Mike Burlingham, Charlotte and Amelia. Charlotte was Peter's daughter. Amelia was a friend of Charlotte's.

The passage to Newtown was a broad reach with winds of force 5 to 6 for most of the trip. The disturbed sea, for example over the Brambles and off Cowes, made helming demanding. On a number of occasions WF9153 put its bows under as if it had a desire to be a submarine. The washboard kept the water away from the occupants who were glad that the Mk2 does not have the spinnaker chute of the Wayfarer World. The kit stowed under the foredeck stayed dry, as did that in the aft locker. WF9153 reached Shalfleet Lake at 1:10pm and WF3282 10 minutes later. The trip had seemed fast with the occasional spell of planing. It was, therefore, disappointing that the outward passage had taken about 20 minutes longer than it had in 2005. Perhaps we had set off too early after all and suffered less favourable tides.

The campsite was much drier than last year. We had been allocated our preferred camping area which was within 20 yards of Shalfleet Lake and the boats. We soon had the tents up and Peter had some tea brewing. During the afternoon some slept, some showered and some walked to the local shop for a few victuals. We lit the disposable barbecues at 6pm. By 8pm we had stuffed ourselves with sausages, chicken, beans and potatoes and were on our way to the New Inn at Shalfleet. A newly added piece of fencing prevented us from taking our usual shortcut across the fields. As in previous years, glow-worms helped illuminate the journey back to the camp.

With no chance that we could float out of Shalfleet Lake before midday, we made a slow start on Sunday morning. Vast quantities of barbecued bacon and sausages were consumed before we eventually starting breaking camp and packing the boats around 11am. The wind was northerly and forecast as force 5 gusting 6 but easing "later". For the return trip, WF9183 was reefed. WF3282 was rigged with small main and jib. At 1pm the boats were rolled into the Lake and we set off to navigate Newtown River directly into the wind and against a flooding (spring) tide.

WF9183, with Mike at the helm, ran into problems when the hold-down cord pulled out of the rudder blade leaving the blade free to float. Eventually the boat was beached on Fishhouse Point on the eastern side of the entrance to the Newtown estuary. The rudder was quickly repaired. The Solent looked awesome with a wind of at least force 6 throwing huge breakers onto the shingle bank on the windward side of the Point. Peter was worried about Charlotte and Amelia. By the time Dave and John arrived, Mike and Peter had already decided that the girls would return to the mainland by ferry. WF9183 would have to return to Corf Campsite and might dry out in Shalfleet Lake. If this happened, Peter and

Mike would be unable to make another attempt to sail home before Monday afternoon. Dave and John decided to stay put hoping that the wind would ease allowing them to continue on their way. By then the tide in the western Solent was rushing towards the Needles.

At about 3pm, WF9183 left Fishhouse Point and ran back the mile to Shalfleet Lake under the genoa. Meanwhile, a passing warden told Dave and John to move on; Fishhouse Point is a nature reserve. As Dave and John expected to be waiting for at least two hours they had decided to put up a tent to get out of the wind. The warden was concerned that they had decided to camp there for the night and was slightly annoyed, to put it mildly, as the tent was pitched less than 10m from a large sign which read "NO LANDING"! In fact, had they had matches with them he would have been even more annoyed as a cup of tea and some sausages would have been on the barbecue. Once the situation was explained the warden was very helpful and pointed across the river mouth explaining that a landing could be made there. Dave and John decided to row across rather than sail as it was only 30 yards. They pushed off and then, belatedly, discovered that the oars were of different lengths and that one of the oars was a fast! After providing entertainment for spectators along the banks and on moored boats, Dave and John picked up a mooring and sailed to the beach on the western side of the harbour entrance where they settled down to wait for the wind to drop and the return of WF9183.

In Shalfleet Lake Mike kept the boat at anchor while Peter set off with Charlotte and Amelia to seek transport to Yarmouth. Peter was back within an hour. He had found a very obliging scout leader who had driven Peter, Charlotte and Amelia to Yarmouth, waited until the girls had boarded a ferry and then returned with Peter to the campsite. By 5pm, after several mobile phone exchanges between Mike, Dave and Derrick Kensett and Roger Rudram "back at base", it was time to try again. WF9153 was underway by 5:20pm. The transit down the Newtown River was much easier with the tide now ebbing. Dave and John set off from the beach in WF3282 at 5:40pm just before Mike and Peter reached them.

Both boats headed ENE into a 2kn tidal stream running WSW. The wind was force 5/6 from NNW making it a very fast reach. WF9153 had taken the lead by the time the convoy reached Salt Mead buoy. To make sure the helms did not get complacent, there were several choppy patches to sail through and, of course, Red Funnel ferries playing "pass the baton" off Cowes. WF9153 reached home at 7:20pm with WF3282 ten minutes behind. Derrick Kensett had brought the trolleys to the water's edge and, with Roger Rudram, he helped recover the boats across the beach and up the slipway. Derrick had also, very kindly, left some sliced fruitcake for the weary travellers.

After that experience, will I do it again? If my next report is titled "The 2006 Overnight Cruise 2 (Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> August to Monday 28<sup>th</sup> August)" then the answer will have been "yes"!!