

The 2006 Overnight Cruise 2 (Saturday 26th August to Monday 28th August)

This was the second cruise to Corf Campsite this year (see report of Overnight Cruise 1) and was an addition to the Club's published programme. For our beloved Commodore, Tim, the season is incomplete unless he spends at least one night under canvas at Newtown. He would have been on the first cruise if Joy, the First Lady, had not made clear that protocol demanded they attend her sister's wedding that weekend together. Under the circumstances Tim had no option but to arrange a second overnight cruise.

At 11:30am Saturday 26th August, a Red Funnel ferry sailed from Southampton with Joy aboard and a Renault Scenic which was very, very full of tents, sleeping bags, cooking appliances, victuals etc. At the same time, three Wayfarers, with remarkably little onboard in terms of camping gear, departed Hill Head beating into a westerly force 4. The Club Wayfarer, Sail No 3282, was helmed by Tim and crewed by Emily Woolnough and Stefan Heinrich. Wayfarer 3802 (Frank Rappini's) was helmed by Andy Cook and crewed by Lawrence Wadham and Gareth, a colleague of Lawrence and Stefan. Wayfarer 9153 was helmed by Emily's Dad, Kevin, and crewed by Debbie and Mike B.

Shortly after sailing, the wind veered to the northwest allowing the flotilla to reach Lepe Spit without tacking. The plan was to enter the western Solent on the Lepe (northern) side and, thus, keep well clear of the powerboat course that extended from Cowes to buoy 'Elephant' on the Island side. Between West Bramble and Lepe Spit, the Wayfarers, reaching in a force 4, managed to keep pace with a couple of fully rigged 30ft+ yachts. At about this time, onboard 9153 Debbie made an attempt on the world 'Mars' bar speed-eating record to the dismay of Mike and Kevin who were expecting to be offered a bite. In 3802, Lawrence developed a novel method for washing an apple that involved throwing it into the sea ahead and picking it up as he sailed past. Meanwhile, Emily pondered jumping into the Solent and swimming the rest of the way.

The three Wayfarers remained in close company throughout and arrived in Newtown River at about 1:30pm. They entered just astern of a group of four or five Enterprises and a Wanderer which had just sailed across from the Beaulieu. Traffic management was not helped by the occasional gust with accompanying wind shift, and the impression that the Enterprises' crews were not sure where they were going. Despite these challenges, the Seafarers made it safely to Shalfleet Lake where they were met by Joy who had already begun emptying the car.

A gazebo was quickly erected in the allocated area (number 30). The gazebo protected sleeping bags and clothing from a couple of brief rain showers while the tents were put up. It then provided shade from the sun when the group was joined by Clive Dakin and Gill Butt for afternoon tea. Clive and Gill with Gill's daughter, Racheal, had sailed from Hardway on Friday afternoon on their Westerly Merlin, 'Kylara'. They had moored on a visitors buoy near the head of the estuary leading up to the campsite. Clive and Gill had to leave the party at about 4:30pm while there was still sufficient water for their tender to make it back to the mooring. That evening the campers dined on beef casserole accompanied by boiled rice, potatoes, peas and carrots followed by rice pudding prepared under the direction of the head chef, Tim, before setting off for the New Inn at Shalfleet.

On Sunday morning, following a huge breakfast, all except Stefan and Gareth set off to walk to Yarmouth along the coastal path. The party paused en route to picnic on the cliffs looking across the Solent to Lymington and giving views past Hurst Castle to Poole in the west. They spent a couple of hours in Yarmouth before catching the 4pm bus back to Shalfleet. Meanwhile Stefan and Gareth, preferring retail therapy, had taken a bus (paying the full, adult, fare!) in the opposite direction toward the bright lights of Newport.

On returning to Corf Camp, Tim and Emily went for a swim in Newtown River. Thus refreshed, the head chef then set about preparing the evening feast comprising ravioli with mashed potatoes, peas and carrots. Too full to contemplate walking to the New Inn, the rest of the evening was spent singing and playing party games around the campfire.

The overnight rain showers had disappeared by the time the campers stirred on Monday morning. After another huge breakfast and some washing up, there was time for the oldies to show the youngsters how to skip before breaking camp and packing the van. Weather forecasts were obtained including one from Peter Cox reassuringly predicting no more rain, wind from NW backing to W and nothing more than force 5. The “no more rain” part turned out to be accurate!

At 12:30pm, Joy set off to catch the ferry from Cowes. By 1:00pm the Wayfarers were ready to leave with 3282 reefed and 3802's centreboard moveable (just) once more. Almost an hour earlier than expected, with the aid of the inflatable rollers the boats could be launched into Shalfleet Lake. After a few tacks they all made it into the Solent and headed for Stansore Point to reverse the outward track. The wind was force 5 and almost northerly making the first leg, to Lepe Spit, a fast beat. From Lepe Spit onwards the sea state built up and there were a few prolonged gusts of at least “a good 6”. From Lepe Spit the flotilla freed off heading initially for Hill Head and then, as it became clearer, the clubhouse. The swell was at its worst over the final mile from B&G to home with the wind breaking the crests of some of the waves. The tide was in and all three made it to the slipway within minutes of each other at about 3:00pm. Once again, Roger Rudram very kindly turned out to help the weary sailors. However, because of the early departure and fast passage, all three boats were in the compound before he reached the Club.

For the second time in two weeks I have returned from Newtown to Hill Head in winds up to force 6. Like any white-knuckle ride – not unlike bashing your head against a brick wall - the peak of enjoyment is just before you stop. Next year I may well go again – but by road. Anyone want to borrow a Wayfarer?