



## Solent And Beyond

5<sup>th</sup> September 2016

Crew: Lynda

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2016 has been the year we joined in the organised cruising run by the Chichester Yacht Club. It's the mainstay of what they do so although we don't really like being organised we thought we'd join in and give it a try.

The Solent & Beyond cruise was led by Graham and Helen Jupp who have a Westerly Storm and had put a good plan together making the most of the tides to go to Poole via Yarmouth, stay for a couple of nights then return via Beaulieu over a period of five days.

The first leg was to Yarmouth which was an easy sail for us from Gosport; most of the other participants came from Chichester which was a bit further away and limited by tides. We set off with a leisurely departure at 12 o'clock, just after high water. To start off there wasn't much wind so we motored over to Wooton Creek, found a bit and hugged the coast to avoid what was left of the tide. The 8 knots of wind we'd found nearly disappeared as we closed on Norris Castle but once in Cowes Roads built up to a steady 10 knots, enough for an splendid sail even though it was right on the nose. With the tide helping us along we were soon off the pretty little pier at Yarmouth with the sails down at 15:30.

We were booked in to Harold Hayes and were surprised to find the whole pontoon empty; we were the first ones there in sharp contrast to the previous cruise when they were worried if we'd get there at all when we finally turned up last. Naturally the fleet soon arrived to moor, we had "Coco" another Contessa 32 along side, with "First Light" on the outside of them. It was interesting to see that we sat a full inch further down in the water than Coco who didn't have all of the weight of the mod cons we'd installed; it proved to be quite a handicap later on. Every cruise has to have a pontoon party and this was no exception, the pontoon just about survived although it did go underwater in places. Everyone then retired to the Wheatsheaf for dinner where we had a particularly good (and very reasonably priced) plaice and chips.

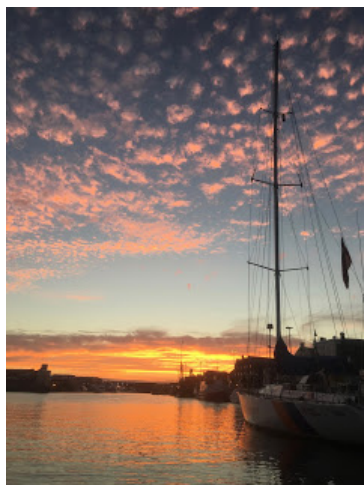




The tide wasn't going to turn until 2pm so we had the morning to ourselves which is always pleasant in Yarmouth; as usual the bookshop did rather well from our visit! The plan for the evening had been to anchor in Studland bay but the forecast was for the wind to strengthen and go around to the South East; the crew was not in favour of a disturbed night so we broke ranks and arranged to stay overnight in the Royal Motor Yacht Club haven. Soon afterwards Graham announced that the plan had been changed (by popular request!) and everyone was going to be able to go directly to Poole Quay; we felt we should stick to our plan.

With a light south westerly our strategy was to motor out to the Bridge by the Needles then head off towards Poole hoping to get to the Looe channel before it was too shallow for us. Unfortunately progress was slow and although we set off with Coco they were able to steadily gain a lead and were way ahead by the time we'd crossed the bay. We tried hard but a combination of extra weight, a fouled bottom together and new Vs old sails was too much to compete with; they squeezed though the channel, we took the safe route through the fairway with the tide falling fast.

The RMYC is a delightful place to stay if you can persuade them to let you in and we had a particularly pleasant time. Drinks on deck in the evening, interesting chats with some of the members a first class three course meal, and a walk around Sandbanks with coffee in the Haven Hotel made it a memorable stay.



After lunch in the sunshine we made our way over to the Quay Yacht Haven to join the other members of the cruise and attempt to answer a quiz the organisers had set to infuriate us all. After a few drinks at the Plymouth Hoe, a meal on board and a review of the quiz results in the pub, the evening slipped by. For the first time we'd got to know some of the CYC membership and enjoy a few drinks in the style of other clubs we've been with although it has to be said there's a marked reluctance to take down ensigns at sunset; despite that they were a really good crowd.

The forecast for the following day (Thursday) was for quite strong winds (20-30kn) but from the south west so a fast passage was in prospect with an early start to catch the tide.

Leaving at 8:30, just before low water, we didn't follow some of the (even earlier) participants with shallow keels through the Looe channel but made our way out through the main fairway accompanied by Coco. It was a brisk sail across the bay, with the wind on the starboard quarter and steadily increasing. This time in more lively conditions we kept up with Coco just ahead and were joined by other boats who had sailed across from the Looe channel. Many had made the wise decision to stick to the North Channel in view of the weather with it's easier approach despite the lack of tide.



By the time we were off the Bridge it was blowing 25 knots and were facing some quite mountainous seas as is usually the case there. A rather "interesting" gybe later we were past the Needles and storming towards Hurst with wind and tide pushing us along at 8 knots or more, an exciting sail!



Once in the Solent we felt able to have a cup of tea but still kept up the same speed as the wind continued to rise. Downwind it had been comfortable but as soon as we turned into the wind we felt the full force with a bumpy time getting into the Beaulieu River; we were registering 28 knots motoring upstream just past the lighthouse. Fortunately it was soon over and mooring up at Ginns was relatively easy if a little protracted with so many yachts arriving at the same time.

It had been such a fast sail that we were moored up in time for lunch and had the afternoon to relax before drinks at the bar at 6pm followed by dinner, if we could remember what we'd ordered. It was good to be back at Ginns where we'd spent so many wonderful times in the past on Alize but a little disappointing that things were not quite up to the standard we'd had before; Robert (the former steward) had set a difficult act to follow.

Fortunately it was a neap tide so, although we wanted to leave at low water we were able to get over the bar without difficulty despite many who thought they'd be seeing us aground later on. At the bar we found we had 3 metres, more than a predicted 2.5, proving them quite wrong; the tide seemed to have turned early too making an early departure a good move. Regrettably we'd had a recurrence of the furling problems the day



before so did not risk opening the genoa and motored past Cowes to Gosport in just over two hours. Frustrating in such strong winds, but we'd had some great sailing earlier and got back in good time for lunch.

Overall a great trip, generally considered more favorable than many CYC organised cruises as it was a bit longer. According to Graham this allowed the crews to get to know each other better which certainly seemed to be the case, the extra couple of days seems to have made a significant difference and something to be repeated next year. From our perspective it seemed that good weather, favourable tides and good company had set us all up for an excellent week. Our thanks have to go to Graham and Helen for organising the cruise; its not surprising that this well proven format is the mainstay of the Club's yachting activities.