



Round The Island On Our Own

22nd & 23rd September 2016

Crew: Chris Allen

Thursday

The tides for Thursday and Friday, when we wanted to go for a sail, were ideal for a trip around the Island. High Water was at 16:30 then 17:30 on Friday so the plan was to get over to Yarmouth in the afternoon on Thursday and leave at the civilised hour of 9am on Friday to pass the Needles at Low water on Friday. We would then have six hours of east going tide to take us back to Gosport the long way. All we needed was some favourable weather and, amazingly, that's what we got for a change; sun all the way and a good breeze on Thursday dropping off a bit on Friday.

After lunch at the Boathouse we set off from Gosport and motored out into the Solent to 10 knots of wind from the south west. We soon had the full sails up and were close reaching off to Cowes. We thought we'd have to go over the bramble bank but in the event were able to cross well south of the stake. The only difficulty we had was when a fleet of Clipper yachts having a race came past and blanketed out the wind for a while; they all had well reefed sails clearly a day for beginners!

In Cowes Roads the wind built up nicely to 15 knots and although it was on the nose we could make good progress with the tide building up under us. A long tack took us to the



entrance of Beaulieu River then another across to Newtown River where the wind built up to 18 knots although as the water was quite smooth we didn't feel the need to reef. Sailing closer to the wind and faster than other boats always feels good, the Contessa was performing well, although the competition was not that challenging we still sped past many other yachts.

All too soon we were approaching the Pier at Yarmouth at 6pm and had to get the sails down sharply for fear

of being swept past by the tide which was really ripping out to Hurst. The harbourmaster not only directed us to a berth but got onto the pontoon to welcome us and take out lines, we were being spoilt! A few drinks and banter with some friends in the Kings Head followed by dinner at the curry house opposite finished off a splendid day's sail.

Friday

After a cup of tea and tidying up the boat we set off at 9am in Bright sunlight fearful that the wind has disappeared. Hurst looked magnificent in the sunshine as we cooked up the traditional breakfast of bacon sandwiches and coffee. By the time we'd reached the Needles the wind had built up a bit although only a fitful 5 knots south westerly, but just enough to switch the engine off and put the cruising chute up. The Needles and Tennison Down looked magnificent in the sunshine.



As forecast the wind did build up and swung round first to the south then to the south east so that as we approached St Catherine's Point we had white sails up and were close reaching. Still not that strong but enough to take us along at 4 knots over the ground thanks to the tide. After a very short spell of turbulence as we past the lighthouse we were on our way to Ventnor and Dunose on a pleasant reach, all very stable and just right for a spot of lunch. This stretch is always interesting to sail along

with so much interest on the hills and cliffs, Ventnor is a pleasant spot with it's haven and victorian archetecure.

Once clear of Dunose we were off the wind so up with the kite again for a splendid reach to the

brilliantly lit Culver Cliff and Princessa shoals. We were soon able to trace the footpaths we knew so well from Bembridge as we drifted by at a steady 4 knots; I'd almost forgotten how peaceful and relaxing sailing can be! This was like the memories of sailing years ago, before we had been subject to all the wind of the past few years.



Once past Bembridge Ledge it was dead down wind to the Forts and Portsmouth Harbour. Fortunately our luck still held and there were no ships that got in the way, we were still on our own as we had been for most of the trip. Approaching the harbour we had a close up view of the new navigational aids and works in preparation for the arrival of the new aircraft carriers; I still couldn't fathom out how they would work!

We tied up once again at Gosport just before 6pm, it may have taken 9 hours to cover the 35 miles but we did sail for most of the time and had time to enjoy the journey. It was particularly memorable as we were the only boat around for the majority of the sail and were able to appreciate such an interesting coastline. A sharp contrast to the Round The Island Race where you have 1500 or so other boats around you and plenty of other things on your mind!