

## **CCC Cruise Report**

### **Single-handing to the Scillies**

Ever since I bought Tranquillity last year I had been dreaming of revisiting the Scilly Islands whose white sands and blue seas are so reminiscent of our dreams of south sea paradise. So it broke my heart when the CCC cruise there clashed with a must go family event. The fact that the club didn't make it wasn't going to discourage me, nor was the lack of willing crew so on Sunday 8th July I was up at 05.30, packed and drove down to Plymouth. After victualling at Morrisons, lunching on tea and pork pie, the afternoon was spent topping up fuel and water, checking the engine and otherwise preparing to sail. The early evening was devoted to drinking in The Bridge discussing the differing attractions of diving and sailing with Freddie whom I got to know while being reberthed to N pontoon during dredging operations over the winter. Finally a couple of cups of tea with Sandra settled me down for an early night.

#### **Monday 9 July**

Awoke at 04.30 and left the pontoon by 05.20 in order to catch the west setting tide. There was enough wind to sail nearly up to Rame Head but it dropped to a Force 2 leaving me no option but to motor nearly to Falmouth while reading happily in a sunny cockpit as the autopilot buzzed away in the background. I saw few other boats on the whole trip and no interesting birds though an enormous flock of gulls near Looe suggested a shoal of fish near the surface..The Northerly F4 that eventually appeared, gave me 5.5 kts into the Helford River where I dropped the main and tied up to a green visitors buoy in the Pool at 14.45 under a blue sky and 28 degrees. Tea and a book whiled away the afternoon leading to a peaceful evening devoted to ringing and texting family and dining on tinned pie, leeks, orange and beer. Bed at 20.15 ready for another tide catching early start.

#### **Tuesday 10 July**

Dropped the buoy at 0520 and sailed out into a NE F5 which gave me 6 kts past the Manacle Rocks. A rising wind and difficult gybe which spilled my bowl of cereals and cup of tea all over the cockpit persuaded me to play safe and put two reefs in the main. This only reduced my speed from 7 kts down to the original 6 kts. By 0715, though, the wind had eased to F3 and so I took them out again. At 08.00 I was due S of the Lizard in NE F4 which, with the tide gave me SOG of 7.3 kts. Shearwaters flew past close to the wave tops as usual. At 09.20 a racing Catamaran passed me with foam flying from his lee hull. An hour later the wind had died away and clouds developed so I had to resort to motor. The day was young and I felt fresh so I decided to abort my original plan of breaking the journey in Newlyn, so set course for Wolf Rock which I passed at 12.00 noticing 3 more yachts on the horizon seemingly also heading for the Scillies, With an E F3 and a pronounced Northerly swell the sea was confused now which left me wondering if such a long leg was a good idea. I was getting tired and my stomach was upset and so, using my phone as an alarm, I managed to get several 5 minute doses which helped. At 17.15 I made a clean entry in sun through St Mary's Sound, could find no buoys in Hugh Town harbour and so anchored in what proved to be an illegal spot. Despite a friendly greeting from a woman in a dinghy, I felt too tired to get the dinghy out and go ashore so tidied the boat and sat admiring the scenery. Due to my upset stomach, all I managed for dinner was soup and water followed by an early night.

#### **Wednesday 11 July**

After a good night's sleep I looked forward to a good breakfast but found that my milk had gone off so had to put up with mint tea followed by a boiled egg and marmite toast. While waiting for the Harbour Master to charge me £19.50, find me a buoy and tell me off very gently for anchoring within the harbour area, I rang my son Ben who was in hospital with a fractured spine. He was very cheerful since they were pleased with his progress and were starting to sit him up. It was time to pump up the dinghy and head ashore to explore St Mary's beginning with tea and toasted tea cake in the first and best cafe that I found. A good walk around the southern half of the island included a

visit to the RNLI Station, the Porth Cressa beach and anchorage and a circumnavigation of the Garrison peninsula. One thing that surprised me was the extraordinary number of cars there were on a small island with few roads. It was a warm day and so, after shopping in the Coop I treated myself to a locally made ice cream. Lunch on board consisted of a BLT sandwich and water before casting off at 13.30 and motoring across over the shallows to New Grimsby Sound between Tresco and Bryher. All of the mooring buoys had been taken so I had to anchor which took 4 attempts due partly to the weed clogging the anchor and also the way different boats were hanging at so many different angles. Doing that single handed involving lots of hauling of chain and rushing backwards and forwards from stem to stern left me exhausted so I settled down in the hot sun, ate the second BLT sandwich washed down with milky coffee while admiring the views of the castle and the scaffold on the top of Hangman's Island.

By 16.30 I felt recovered enough to explore a little of Tresco past the Town Hill pub and along the western shore where 3 kids carelessly let their blow up unicorn blow away to sea. It didn't seem to unduly worry them. After a San Miguel at the Abbey Farm pub I had a long motor against the tide back to the boat. Dined on fishcake and salad, finished my book and bed.

### **Thursday 12 July**

Up at 05.30 and discovered that England had lost so after a gentle breakfast I took the dinghy to the Bryher Low Water Quay struggling with the sea weed which kept try to tangle the outboard prop. Nevertheless I was able to drag the dinghy up onto the beautiful fine white sand and went exploring. The island is obviously set up for tourism but, apart from the hotel complex by Hell Bay you still get a sense of an old fishing community where everything is done on a small scale. The walk to Hell Bay and its rain starved lake was exhilarating and passed several surprises such as a modern shop, an old fire station, a grass tennis court which doubled as a football pitch and two uses for retired red post boxes - one as a micro museum and the other as a greenhouse for sunflowers. The only birds seemed to be gulls and sparrows though later I did see a pair of oystercatchers on Hangman's Rock. After tea and newly baked scone at the Ivy Cafe I had a look at Fraggie Rock Bay and was back on the boat by 12.30.

At 17.30 I again went ashore again hoping to have dinner there but, luckily as it turned out, they were all fully booked so I went to the fishmonger by the quay and bought the first freshly caught mackerel of the season plus a lobster sandwich and crab quiche. Just as I was arriving back at the boat I heard shouts from several boats to discover that despite having been at anchor for 24 hours without trouble, spring tides of 4 kts and weed on the anchor had caused be to drag and I was heading back into the moored boats at speed. Thank god for responsible skippers since two of them dashed across to me and helped to get up the anchor and show me where I could safely anchor in Green Bay with shallow water and low tides. Since getting home, the purchase of an extra 40 metres of chain should stop that happening again. Dinner was a grilled mackerel with bread, butter and tomatoes followed by a short sleep until 22.00 when the boat grounded as expected. Once it had settled I slept until 02.00 when the boat had lifted but somehow wrapped the anchor warp around the keel which involved pulling it up at the anchor end then releasing the bitter end, unwrapping and retying it. Back to bed.

### **Friday 13th July**

Awoke at 05.00 and away by 05.30 which allowed me to get back through the shallows and round the northern coast of St Mary's before the tide fell. I did pay for this later when I had adverse tides between Lands End and The Lizard, but a different route out of the islands would have been even slower. Anyway, the weather was fine with a northerly F2 and slight sea so motored out on a 75 degree course for the mainland. At 07.30 3 dolphins briefly danced around the boat followed by 2 dozen gannets diving for fish so perhaps I had sailed through a mackerel shoal. At 08.40 I passed an 11 storey high P&O cruise ship dawdling down the shipping lane at no more than 5 kts. The wind slowly improved and so at 10.40 we were able to make 5.4 kts in a northerly F4 and shortly after with Lands End on the beam, 6 guillemots flew up in front of the bow and I saw the first yacht of the day. Unfortunately by noon the wind had died again so we needed engine for a couple of hours during which time I was able to enjoy the luscious Bryher LLCT sandwich for lunch. (Lobster, lettuce, cucumber and tomato)

15.00 saw the wind die again and so the faithful old engine saw us past the Lizard and 16.00 and into Helford by 18.30. Once again there were no buoys but luckily I found the Mooring Master who helped me raft up on "Panacea" whose skipper, he assured me, was miles away. As soon as he was gone, said skipper, called Graham, who keeps his boat in the Tamar, popped his head out of the companion way so we spent the evening chatting and drinking a bottle of Rioja between us. Dinner was the Bryher crab quiche.

### Saturday 14th July

At 06.00 I helped Graham unmoor, had a milkless breakfast (a fridge would be nice) and was away by 06.30 passing through a large flock of black headed gulls in the entrance. Motor was needed again since the wind was only 4 kts but at least it gave me a flat sea with only the slightest of ripples. This lasted until the Draystone buoy just after Rame Head which allowed me to keep the binoculars out and observe 5 shearwaters flying past, another cruise ship on the horizon, 3 small fishing boats going in tight circles towing what I assumed were purse seine nets and a small stationary power boat with 2 rods out of the back with two guys seemingly asleep in the cockpit. The SW F4 which saw me into Plymouth, gave me some enjoyable sailing through the excitement of the Plymouth Regatta - it was a good thing that I had some knowledge of the racing rules, especially when I got caught up in the start of a big boat race.

At 16.00 it was time to fill up with diesel, settle in my home berth, clean up and shower before going up to the Bridge to celebrate. Dinner was beautifully braised belly pork and 2 pints of bitter by which time Sandra had joined me, insisting that the beer needed washing down with a double whisky. If that was not enough, Colin and Val joined us on Tranquillity for Pimms, Tonic and wine as we closed what, for me, was a truly successful week.

Paul Mack



Tranquillity (red hull) anchored in New Grimsby Sound with Hangmans Rock on the left.