

KINGFISHER LOG 2021

KINGFISHER GOES WEST



Kingfisher off Great Bay St Martin's, Isles of Scilly

Introduction

Following a second extensive winter refit, this time at Harbour Marine Services (“HMS”) at Southwold, Kingfisher arrived back at Chichester Harbour in time to do her mother-ship duty at the British Classic Yacht Club Regatta in mid-July, where her charge Mikado won her class. The summer plan was then at least a month’s cruise after a week in Argentario, visiting our son Nick.

With COVID making visits to Europe difficult in yachts, our only real choice was to revisit the South West coast of England, the scene of Kingfisher’s first shakedown cruise in 2019, with lots of favourite ports and rivers, and the Scillies as the goal, weather permitting.

By the end of the first week in August the prevailing SW wind pattern had become firmly established, giving the participants in the Fastnet race a stern start, with winds up to F7 roaring up West Solent and causing lots of retirements.

Sunday 7th August – Chi to Cowes

Not to be outdone by the Fastnet fleet we left Northney at 10.15 bound for Cowes, with a plan to spend two nights at the RYS Haven. As luck would have it, the Castle was unusually closed, to clean up and recover from Cowes Week, but the Haven was therefore peaceful, with only two other yachts present. The passage there was dead upwind into 25kts plus, as always roughest of all at Chi Harbour entrance, giving Kingfisher a welcome opportunity to demonstrate her excellent seakeeping, and us a chance to see that all last year’s leaks around the wheelhouse windows and Clearview screen had been fixed during the winter refit. Well, they had, almost, and a little further treatment from Captain Tolley meant that they gave us no more trouble.

A brisk passage at a prudently modest 6.5 kts brought us to Osborne Bay in time for lunch, and we were safely in the RYS Haven by teatime, followed by evening drinks with Richard Crowder in his fabulous state of the art modern motor yacht, complete with omni-directional screws and the ability to lie geo-stationary at the touch of a button.

A nice hot Charlie Bringham fish pie rounded off the day. We’re still rejoicing in having our first boat with an oven.

Monday 8th August – Alongside at Cowes

Exceptionally heavy overnight rain was followed by a nice sunny day in Cowes, where we were visited by our niece-in-law Margaret and her twin girls for lunch, paying their first visit to Cowes and bringing some newly covered deck cushions which hadn’t been ready when we left. Then Johnny Clark and Liz Jones drove over from Ryde for dinner on board.

Tuesday 10th August – Cowes to Weymouth

This was our real start day, and the wind had kindly moderated to a comfortable 10-15 kts, but still South-West, dead on the nose. We wanted to get to Weymouth as our jumping-off point for West Bay. So, to get there in a single tide, we started at 09.15 dodging the east-going stream by staying very close inshore, reaching the Needles at slack water by 11.15, with a fair tide from then all the way.

With wind over-tide it was quite bouncy through the St Albans race at 14.00, but nothing like as wet as it would have been beating through in Mikado. By then we had our new steadying sail up, which kept us from rolling as we bore away onto a port tack fetch for Weymouth, coming alongside at 15.45.

Alongside meant rafted up on a modern 48ft power boat, making it very hard getting across her high superstructure to the dock. Close astern was the lovely, fast, famous, Le Havre pilot cutter Jolie Brise.

Soon afterwards we were joined by David Murrin and Sarah in Cetewayo, a fellow competitor in the BCYC Regatta, who had also sailed up from Cowes, getting seriously wet in the St Albans race.

Rosie (the skipper's step-mum) and John and Maggie Ungley joined us for dinner on board, followed by the Cetewayo team for red wine and cheese. By then we had dropped back alongside her, to make it easier for our dinner guests to get ashore.



Alongside Cetewayo at Weymouth

Wednesday 11th August – Weymouth to Dartmouth

After fuelling from a bowser lorry on the dockside (a very useful and friendly service at Weymouth) we left for our trip across West Bay at 11.45, planning to take the South-going eddy along Portland, and arrive at the Bill at slack water, which we duly did, at 12.50. Cetewayo had planned to cruise west with us in company, leaving Weymouth at the same time, but we saw no more of her.



Rounding Portland Bill

The wind was SW by S, about 12kts, just free enough for our steadying sail to keep us from rolling over the large SW swell. A pretty uneventful passage, apart from the usual welcome committee of friendly dolphins as we neared Dartmouth, entering harbour at 18.15, after carrying a fair tide the whole way across West Bay, save from the last couple of miles.



Entering Dartmouth

At the entrance we met Peter Gregson (of Wooden Ships) with his sons Richard and Marcus, sailing a beautiful clinker traditional Folkboat, reminding us of our trip through the Stockholm Archipelago in a very similar boat. We had bought Mikado through Peter in the late 1990s, and he has been a constant wise advisor and good friend ever since.

They joined us on board for drinks on the visitors' pontoon in Dartmouth as the evening mist and drizzle descended. Much chat about how the younger generation (including our son James) are snapping up classic boats, keeping the wooden tradition alive and well. James has just bought Surian, a beautiful Buchanan Sea Spray: 27ft's worth of perfect last generation wooden yacht building, complete with mirror smooth topsides, perfect teak deck, hot and cold running water, radar, plotter, autopilot, asymmetric etc. etc. Wooden Ships were, just as for us, his entry into the classic yacht scene.

Thursday 12th August – Dartmouth to Falmouth

We thought we would keep up the momentum towards the Scillies by our longest hop thus far, missing out on the pleasures of Salcombe, Plymouth and Fowey, and pushing straight on to Falmouth, despite the continuing headwinds.

It was a misty, almost foggy start, with the radar switched on.

Again, we took the first of the South-going eddy towards Start Point, leaving at 09.50 and arriving there just as the tide turned an hour later, but before the wind against tide overfalls had time to build up.

A bit more wind, at SW 16-23 kts, but the sun came out mid-afternoon as the wind eased. More dolphins came to say hello, as well as a fishery protection boat. We also had our closest run past the Eddystone, so often missed when cruising closer inshore.



The Eddystone

Another quite uneventful upwind day, ending at Port Pendennis at 18.45, just in time before the dockmaster went home for the evening.

For us it was a fish dinner in what used to be Rick Stein's fish restaurant, now converted to an eater/party venue with (thank goodness) one available table for two. The staycation effect makes finding somewhere nice to eat without booking ahead very hard this summer.

Friday 13th August – a day in the Fal

Not an auspicious day for going to sea, so we decided to stay in the Falmouth area. With 20 kts plus of wind from the South-West, heading round the Lizard wouldn't have been comfortable anyway.

After refuelling we went up-river to see what Kingfisher's previous owner's new boat (his second since parting with her) looked like, on Kingfisher's old mooring off the Greenbank Hotel. He now has a Grand Banks motor yacht. Looks very comfortable, and we may be biased but we think Kingfisher is (much) prettier.



Anchored off Trellissick

Then up the Carrick Roads to our favourite anchorage off Trellissick House, just to the SW of the shallow bay in front of the house, well sheltered from prevailing winds, and quite deep close inshore. There is a view right down the estuary, and it's a perfect viewing point for vessels coming up and down river, just where it narrows. There we waited to be joined by our (almost) sister ship Chinda. She came past at 17.30, and we followed in line astern up-river to tie up either side of a detached pontoon at Tregothnan, for a peaceful evening together.



Two sisters, Chinda and Kingfisher

Chinda is a 46ft 'stretched' Silver Leaf, not built in the Clyde, but on the Swale in 1946. She must be one of the first motor yachts of any size built in the UK after the war. Also restored at Southwold by HMS. She has the more typical galley and saloon forward, stateroom aft, layout. Apart from her bigger size, the real practical difference between us is that Chinda has her main steering position outside, with all the navionics etc. and only a wheel in the wheelhouse. So, although her Southern ancestry makes her feel slightly less spartan (or Scottish Presbyterian) than Kingfisher, open sea passages call for a tougher kind of owner, being out in the wind and spray when on watch.

Nothing like that this evening, however. We had a lovely fish dinner with her owners Nic and Bertie Seal on Chinda's quarterdeck, with not even enough wind to cause goosebumps. Then we retired to Kingfisher' saloon where we made, in Nic's words the next morning, a 'wee dent' in the malt whisky.

Saturday 14th August – Falmouth to Newlyn

Time to be heading West again. The day started showery, but the forecast was for lighter winds from the South, just for once not on the nose, once round the Lizard.

We planned to go to Newlyn, as the best jumping-off point for the Scillies, and in company with Thalia, the wonderful 1888 gaff cutter built by Wanhill of Poole and now owned by David Aisher. His wife Kristi now has another Silver, Cerveza, which she snapped up after spending a weekend in Kingfisher in late 2019.



Thalia

So we joined up with Thalia back in Falmouth harbour, and both headed West, rounding the Manacles at 10.45, followed by a slightly bumpy rounding of the Lizard, just as the tide started to go West, at mid-day. The thing to do in Silvers in a bumpy sea is just to slow down a bit. Their excellent seakeeping qualities going upwind soon enable you to find a (still respectable) speed which avoids any slamming, even if spray continues to come over in buckets. Unlike Portland, there is no way inside the overfalls at the Lizard, but staying well in, just off the rocky shallows, keeps the rough bit to a minimum.

We were in Newlyn by 14.15, well ahead of Thalia, to be directed into a berth between two fishing boats. Newlyn is a busy fishing harbour, with only a little space for yachts. Thalia had to go on the wall, rafted alongside the local fishery protection vessel. But the harbour master is very welcoming, there are good marina-like pontoons and fingers, and the fish restaurants ashore are simply splendid.

We spent the afternoon visiting good friends Shona and Carla who have moved to a beautiful secluded valley between Newlyn and Penzance, followed by a convivial fish supper with our friends and Thalia's crew at the Mackerel Sky seafood bar.

Sunday 15th August – alongside at Newlyn

We spent the day at Newlyn.



Sunday lunch in the showers at Newlyn

After a truly excellent lunch (same team) at the newly opened Argoe fish restaurant overlooking the harbour, sitting outside with only one rain shower, the skippers of Kingfisher and Thalia walked it off by an afternoon hike to Mousehole, along the coast, and back by a hilly inland route.

Our real purpose was to try and get a look at a big disused quarry South of Newlyn, which might become a new marina (rather like Beaucette in Guernsey) if someone can summon up the energy to blow up the intervening land, including the coast road.

Nothing doing. The quarry was too heavily fenced off to be seen. But we did stop to remember the brave Penlee lifeboat crew at the memorial on the coast road, and for the inevitable ice cream at Mousehole.

Monday 16th August – to the Scillies at last

The endless succession of SW winds was forecast to be interrupted by a brief NW veer, so it was time to get to our main destination.

We proceeded from Newlyn at a stately 6.25 kts to keep company with Thalia motor-sailing under easy sail. We passed Land's End by 10.35, with 15 kts of NW sufficiently on our beam to call for the steadying sail. An uneventful passage (with few boats around) led us to Porthcressa on St Mary's by 14.55.

Porthcressa is a very nice anchorage, right next to the fleshpots of the main town, and better protected from swell than the cramped visitors' moorings in the main harbour, at least in prevailing winds, and particularly in a North Westerly. But we soon appreciated how the pandemic had concentrated yachts on the English coasts. Normally Porthcressa might have about half a dozen boats, well spread out. But this time there were more than twenty. We were to find most of the Scilly anchorages much busier than usual, in some cases making it really quite hard to find swinging room if anchoring (which we generally prefer to mooring).

Our anchorage was also only a short row, then walk, to our dinner date with sister Charlotte, her husband Shaun and daughter Olivia. They holiday every year in the Scillies, getting around the islands bravely in an inflatable kayak. We had a luxury evening at St Mary's Hall Hotel, by the parish church, where they do a really delicious local caught lobster thermidor.



Lobster Thermidor at St Mary's Hall Hotel

Tuesday 17th August – living it up at St Agnes



The Cove, St Agnes

Between St Agnes and tiny Gugh there is a narrow inlet called the Cove, with a sandbar at its head connecting the two islands at almost all states of tide. Any wind between North-East, through South to West brings in a swell which can make it roly, but today, with a North-West breeze, was ideal.

So off we went at 10.30, on the short hop over from Porthcressa, followed by Thalia, into another very crowded but unusually smooth anchorage.

After early lunch aboard it was ashore to explore the island, the highlights being home-made ice creams at Troytown farm, cream tea at the Coastguard café, finishing with drinks on Thalia, where we also met Johnny Goodwin and his family (chartering Richard Matthews' magnificent Oyster 85 Midnight), James and Sam Ansell and (back on Kingfisher) Noel and Heike Peck, friends of our predecessor owner of Mikado, Chris Cracknell.

Even adding a quick trip around Gugh, the exercise didn't begin to make up for all the cholesterol and other goodies.

The highlight of the day was being there to witness an extraordinary encounter with a friendly (but probably very lonely) dolphin. His main nickname seems to be Nick, because of all the dents in his skin where he has come into contact with propellers and other yacht extremities. Some call him Randy. No relation of the infamous Wally the Walrus which had recently been causing mayhem in the islands, but determined to make friends with any swimmer prepared to have a close encounter. Emily Harris from Thalia was one of those who jumped in to do just that, while others looked on spellbound in dinghies and from paddleboards.

Wednesday 18th August – exploring eastwards

The continuing NW wind made it an ideal day to explore the Eastern Isles.

But first we took up the offer to visit the magnificent and completely unaltered 1939 motor lifeboat Michael Stephens anchored at the head of the Cove. She is a Dunkirk Little Ship, built by Samuel White's in Cowes, completely original on deck, in the deep sheltered cockpit and in the engine room, even with funnel and grab lines, but now cruised by Charles and Elizabeth Cave. She was the Lowestoft lifeboat for 24 years. Coffee and biscuits in the cockpit was a delightful trip back in time.



The Michael Stephens

After Thalia cleared a foul anchor it was off at 11.00 for the Gantillies, for a 'bubbly' long lunch at anchor in the shelter of Ragged Island. The bubbles were meant to celebrate Emily's birthday, but she then had to confess that she was a day ahead of herself!

We thought that the NW wind would be good for exploring the outside of St Martin's, where there are a series of sandy bays with off-lying islets and rocks giving some protection from the swell. But not much as it turned out. Somehow the NW swell works its way round the top of St Martin's, making the bays too roly for comfort. So, on we went, round the top of St Martin's to an anchor in Tean Sound, to the south of the moorings, out of the swell and out of the worst of the strong tidal current there. On the way we did a full power run past Thalia for a photo-shoot by Emily, who later provided the lovely picture of Kingfisher at the beginning of this log.

Thalia anchored nearby, for her last evening in the Scillies before sailing home while the Westerlies lasted. We all went ashore for drinks with James Trafford, in his family cottage in Higher Town,

before supper at the Seven Stones. James ferried us around in his elderly mini-hatchback. At one point we squeezed no less than seven of us inside, including Emily and co-crew Hannah in the boot.

Thursday 19th August – New Grimsby and Bryher

Stores were beginning to get a bit low, so it was off early, past Round Island to New Grimsby sound, between Tresco and Bryher, for shopping at the excellent and well-stocked supermarket in New Grimsby. After lunch back on board it was time for a good walk around Bryher, as a showery morning gave way to a sunny afternoon. Although Tresco and Bryher are close to each other, they could not be more different. Tresco is a sophisticated, well-run holiday island, with every amenity, wonderful botanical gardens and electric buses with comic names like Boris and Maggie. Bryher remains the little island at the edge of the world, with no traffic, lovely sandy bays mixed with wild rocky coast on the Western side, and nothing modern apart from the Hell Bay Hotel, where we had a rather solitary afternoon tea.

Rather more fun is Island Fish, the fresh fish shop-cum-café near the ferry landing opposite Tresco. Every Thursday they do a mountain of take-away seafood paella. Alas, we were not free to collect at the appointed time, but settled for their equally good fish pies, to be warmed up in the oven later in the evening.

The reason we had to miss the paella was an invitation to evening drinks from Calum and Amanda Sillars (RYS) in Rinamara (Gaelic for Queen of the Sea). She is one of the justly famous McGruer 47ft yawls, built right at the end of the period of wooden boatbuilding. Rinamara had just been extensively and beautifully refitted by Stirlings at the historic no.1 Slip in Plymouth, about a year after Kingfisher received similar treatment for us in 2019/20. Like Thalia, she was getting ready for an early departure back to the mainland the following morning, before the long-established Westerlies finally gave out. She really is the last word in comfortable, good performance, wooden cruising boats. Whatever their modern technology, it is very hard to find anything built later in GRP with a better combination of good looks, comfort at sea and performance under sail.

Friday 20th August- Samson

Samson, and its small anchorage just off the sandy beach on its East side, is high on our list of favourite spots in the Scillies. The island is uninhabited, but with extensive ruins to explore from many centuries' habitation by rugged, self-sufficient islanders. The anchorage off the beach, between Bar Point and Puffin Island, is almost empty once the day-tripper boats have gone, mainly because of the shallow depth at low tide. The beach is perfect for bathing, and there is shelter from almost all wind directions, provided you anchor well in.

The Samson anchorage is in plain sight from New Grimsby, but getting there from New Grimsby harbour at low tide (which it was) involves a long detour round the top of Bryher, across the aptly named Hell Bay and round the many rocks and islets on its West side. We threaded our way inside Scilly Rock, round Black Rocks and then between Castle Rock and Illiswilgig, coming to our anchor fully sheltered from the SW wind at 10.30.

After our walk mainly through breast-high bracken, alone apart from one other group, the tide was still quite low, so we continued West about, round the rocky back of Samson, outside the Minalto

rocks and ledges, before turning East to look for somewhere to go swimming. Bar Point on St Mary's looked good, since the sandy spit sticks out northwards and cuts off the last of the Westerly swell. All looked good as we anchored, but then drizzle set in and spoilt our plans.

We thought we would have another go at the North-East (outside) of St Martin's, so we threaded our way through the Eastern Isles again, coming to anchor in Bread and Cheese Cove, a deep inlet just past the daymark at the South-East end of St Martin's. We shared this small anchorage with only one other boat and spent a peaceful night in what proved to be the last rain of the whole cruise. Bread and Cheese Cove doesn't have the grand sandy beaches found elsewhere on the back of St Martin's, but it is deep and quite dramatic, with steep cliffs on both sides and a tiny rocky beach at the head of the cove, with a steep path up to the daymark. Well worth a visit, and a safe night's stay in Westerly winds.

Saturday 21st August – Boat trip for Charlotte

This was the day we'd set aside to take sister Charlotte and her family boating. By this time they had moved to a picturesque cottage in Higher Town on St Martin's, right opposite the bakery, so a pick-up in Great Bay required them to take only a short walk, bringing us some shopping, before a dinghy ride out to Kingfisher, which had moved round one bay to collect them.

The plan was to take them to places where they couldn't go in their kayak. After welcome coffee during a sharp shower it was round the top of St Martin's again, seal watching off Great Merrick Ledge, before anchoring in Porth Morran, a long inlet between rocky ledges right at the North end, offering very good shelter in winds with any South element, although the inner part of the inlet is rather choked with weed.



Seal watching off St Martin's

The weather obliged, just in time, with an early shower giving way to wall to wall sunshine, which was to last for most of the rest of our stay in the Scillies, after a rather grey first week.

After more coffee we continued West, inside Round Island, for a good explore of Hell Bay and its blue jelly- fish, past Castle Rock again and into our favourite Samson anchorage in time for lunch.



Happy beachers at Samson

The afternoon was spent swimming and shell hunting on the sunny beach during the rising tide, where we were joined by a small army (or perhaps large fleet) of kayakers.

We'd all booked into the famous Adams family fish and chippie on St Martin's for supper, so we were back at anchor in Great Bay for a run ashore by 17.30. The Adams family doesn't just run a chippie. They catch the fish and grow the potatoes as well.

The washing machine in Charlotte's cottage worked hard while we were at supper, and it was a glorious sunset by the time we began our walk back to Great Bay in the evening.



Great bay, St Martin's in the gloaming

Sunday 22nd August – St Helens Pool

Great Bay gave us a rather rolly night, perhaps because of a veer in the wind. So we left at 06.00 and moved round to a guaranteed placid anchorage in St Helen's Pool, between St Martin's and Tresco. It deserves its reputation as the best anchorage in the Scillies, protected by Tresco in the West, St Martin and Tean in the East, St Helen's (the quarantine island) in the North and extensive shallows in the South. The day was spent quietly, walking on Tean in the morning, and rowing round Crow's Island watching the many oyster catchers in the afternoon.

Monday 23rd August – the NE wind starts

We woke up in flat calm to find that Sybil of Cumae had come in to St Helen's Pool during the night, on her way back from Milford Haven to Plymouth. I'm afraid to have to report that in our eagerness to see her owner Cornelius van Rijckevorsel we woke them up from a well-deserved sleep. But they seemed very good-tempered about it once they saw who it was.



Sybil of Cumae

Sybil is a 1903 one-off Fife cutter, in effect a big sister of Mikado. Glorious Fife sheer line and very low freeboard, with a metal mast painted to look like wood (and therefore called Mt Edgecumbe pine). She sails like a witch, and we were anxious to ensure that she was going to enter for the 2022 Fife Regatta in the Clyde, which she has thus far never attended.

Leaving her crew to return to their bunks we left at 07.15 for another visit to the Cove at St Agnes, since the very calm weather promised freedom from the usual swell.

Our purpose this time was to find and explore Beady Pool on the South side of St Agnes, where there are reputed to be a hoard of glass beads from a long-vanished wreck. With the assistance of Google Maps we found the pool, but sadly no beads.

So it was up the hill for lunch at the nearby Coastguard café, followed by swimming off our newly acquired swimming ladder in the Cove.

With a North Easterly wind just starting (with risk of swell overnight) we decided to head for St Mary's harbour for the night, arriving in time to be part of the welcoming party for the transatlantic rower Ian Rivers in his boat Sentinel, who had been forced to row the last few miles to St Mary against the wind and tide. How a single oarsman makes real progress in such conditions in a large transatlantic self-righting boat passes my comprehension. It reinforces the wisdom of the old adage that if God had intended us to row He would never have given us the wind.



Sentinel, just arrived from across the pond

St Mary's is not one of our favourite anchorages. The visitors' buoys are largely outside the protection of the harbour wall, and amazingly close together for the size of boat they claim to accommodate. They are not very close to the town (certainly no closer than the anchorage at Porthcressa on the other side of the town), and East to South is the only wind direction where the anchorage is really swell-free. And it was very crowded, with only one or two free moorings.

Tuesday 24th August – Herbie the duck

The morning was spent fuelling, watering and shopping in St Mary's. By this time the East wind had become well established, at 20 kts, and was (unknown to us at that stage) to persist for almost the whole of the rest of the cruise, a duration for an Easterly which I have never previously encountered in the summer. At that stage we fondly thought it couldn't last for more than a few days, before the prevailing Westerlies resumed to blow us comfortably home. How wrong we were!

Low tide (springs) was at 13.30 so we went only as far as our favourite anchorage off Samson for lunch, waiting for the young flood to cross the shallows back to New Grimsby for the evening, where we anchored off the quay at 16.40, in preparation for entertaining James and Fiona Holman to dinner on board. They have an annual timeshare on Tresco, and no summer visit to the Scillies is complete without our meeting up.

Next to us was a yellow Prout 31ft catamaran called Luna with mum and dad and a young family aboard plus, astonishingly, a resident duck called Herbie. He lived on board, flying off each day for a bit of exercise but always returning faithfully home for the evening. I've heard of ships' cats, dogs and even rats, but a duck????



Herbie the duck

We duly picked up James and Fiona off the quay at 19.00 and anchored for dinner just under Cromwell's Castle, which commands the narrow entrance to New Grimsby harbour, and was built to put a final end to Royalist privateering from the Scillies during the Civil War.



Cromwell's Castle, Tresco

Wednesday 25th August - Cathy arrives



Cathy

Today we were due to be joined by our good friend Cathy (the mother of our friends in Newlyn) for a few days, who was coming over to the Islands in Scillonian. We duly picked her up from the very end of the main quay at St Mary's at 12.45 before taking advantage of the continuing Easterly to explore the usually forbidden West coast of Bryher, coming to a sheltered anchor for lunch just outside the grandly but misleadingly named Great Porth, overlooked by the Hell Bay Hotel, which isn't in Hell Bay at all. This area is usually inaccessible to visiting yachts due to the prevailing swell from the West, but the combination of a low spring tide (exposing rocky ledges on all sides) and the East wind, now down to 12 kts, made it an idyllic day-time anchorage, though not a place to stay overnight.

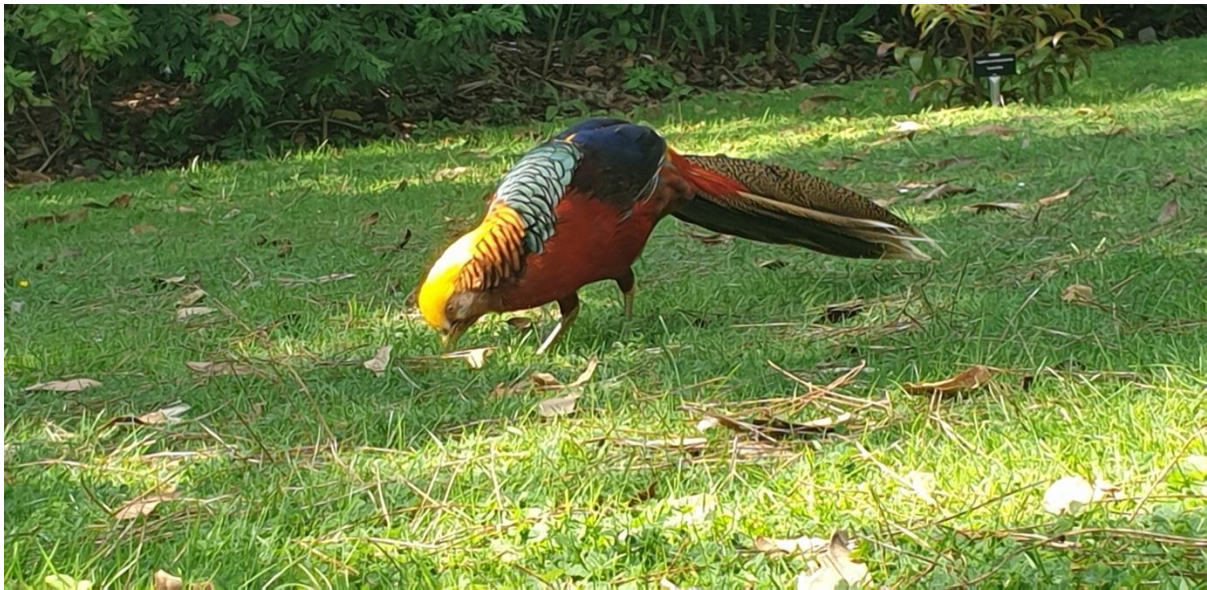
Beverly and Cathy fancied a walk back across Bryher, so the skipper took them ashore in the tender and then single-handed around the top of Bryher to New Grimsby harbour to pick them up.

We had been invited by Andy Bristow for drinks aboard David and Kate Kenyon's lovely Italian-built motor yacht Back Soon, anchored off Hangman's Rock, where we were joined on board by James Trafford and his parents. What a contrast with Kingfisher! No hint of the presbytery. Just unashamed luxury, waiter service from her young paid crew, deck chairs, acres of white paint and teak decks. 'Just sublime', as Para Handy would say.

Thursday 26th August

With wall-to-wall sunshine setting in under a welcome anticyclone (not shared by most of England) we decided to stay in New Grimsby, to swim, to 'do' the Tresco botanical gardens and this time to get our share of the Thursday seafood Paella being served up by the Bryher fish café.

The gardens continue to be a surprise and delight every time we visit them. Too big to be crowded (even though now a cruise ship destination), immaculately maintained and with a wealth of flora not viable on most of the mainland, they really are a must-see for anyone cruising to the Scillies. There are even red squirrels and a brightly coloured family of quite tame golden pheasants.



Tame Golden Pheasant at Tresco Gardens

On return we found we had anchored a bit too near the Bryher side of the shallow end of the harbour, the first time we have ever grounded Kingfisher, but only very slightly, on a soft sand bottom. A 50 yd move East after low water secured sufficient swinging room for the night, and the peaceful demolition of the paella, which fully lived up to expectations.

Friday 27th August – Old Grimsby

A calm and sunny day was ideal for an expedition to the Eastern Isles, where we anchored for breakfast between Great and Little Gantilly, before heading back across the flats to an anchor off the Blockhouse Fort just south of Old Grimsby harbour, on the east side of Tresco. The Blockhouse is an old gun battery which performed the same function at Old Grimsby which Cromwell's Castle did at New Grimsby.



The Blockhouse, Old Grimsby, Tresco

Charlotte, Shaun and Olivia kayaked over the flats from St Martin's, and we all went to lunch at the Ruin, the excellent beach restaurant on the other side of the harbour. Seafood platter and crab linguine were the order of the day.



The Ruin beach café, Old Grimsby, Tresco

After exploring the Blockhouse and the nearby beaches, we said a temporary goodbye to Charlotte and family, in time to welcome Jenny and Max Thorneycroft on board for early evening drinks. They were also time-sharing on Tresco and en route to the Ruin for dinner.

Saturday 29th August – Annet and a birthday for Charlotte

This was to be our last day in the Scillies, even though the East wind showed no sign of coming to an end. The complete absence of any Westerly swell made it possible to explore another area usually forbidden to yachts, namely Annet and the West side of St Agnes. Annet is a bird reserve from which all humans are excluded, and its shores, especially to the West, are peppered with rocks and shoals, not all completely charted. On the West side of St Agnes there is a little drying harbour called Periglis, with a few local fishing boats in residence, into which we poked our nose, but without stopping since the tide was falling.



Off Periglis, St Agnes

Today was Charlotte's birthday so, before the tide got too low over the flats, we high-tailed it back to the anchorage South of Tean, by 11.05. The afternoon was spent walking round the North side of St Martin's, an expedition made rather longer than expected by the need to walk down most of the North-East side before finding a path back across the middle. Bev and Cathy cooled down with a quick swim.

Then it was birthday champagne on the beach, followed by birthday dinner at the Karma Hotel, and back to the boat in the dark.



Birthday Champagne on the beach, Tean Sound, St Martin's

Sunday 30th August – back to the mainland

Anxious study of the Almanack and tidal-stream atlases on Saturday evening suggested a very early departure the following morning. The plan was to avoid reaching the Lizard with a full East-going tide pushing against the continuing Easterly wind. So at 05.00 we crept up Tean Sound in the misty darkness, which turned into a sunny morning with 10 kts of wind from the North East, nearly on the nose but not enough to kick up an uncomfortable sea.



Wolf Rock

Our direct route to the Lizard took us 1.5 miles off Wolf Rock by 08.00, and we crossed courses with Scillonian (on her way out) by 09.30. The wind slowly veered round to South-East and dropped a bit, falling to a calm by the time we reached the Lizard at 11.00.

Turning into the mouth of the Helford at 12.40 we met up with another Silver Leaf, Silver Crescent, off Gillan Creek, before anchoring off Greg Powlesland's slip at Tremelin at 13.15.

Greg and his son Rupert (part of Mikado's crew) were at the Durgan Regatta down-stream, but Greg joined us for drinks at 18.00, sailing up in his delightful 18ft lug-rigged skiff.



Greg Powlesland in his skiff

Then we moved up to our favourite anchorage off Tremayne Quay for a peaceful night among the owls.



At peace off Tremayne Quay, Helford River

Monday 3rd August. – a peaceful day in the Helford

Cathy was due to leave us that morning, so she went ashore at Tremelin, after which the lure of a day in peace at Tremayne proved irresistible.

Helford River is a beautiful place, in three quite different parts. First (coming in) there are the lovely wide expanses and little bays of the outer entrance, but these were susceptible to the Easterly swell. Then there is the central part near the village and Porth Navas, but it's choked with moored boats. Finally there is the utterly peaceful upper part, all the way to Gweek Quay, but most of it dries out, and the lower part is (or used to be) encumbered with oyster beds.

But for us, Tremayne Quay hits the spot. It's as far up the Helford as you can remain afloat at low tide, provided you anchor in the little deep pool opposite the quay. There are wonderful woods surrounding the quay, looked after by the National Trust, where you can walk for hours undisturbed by anything mechanical. We shared the anchorage with a little Morecombe Bay prawn, almost out of sight of the big gaggle of moored yachts in Helford narrows over a mile downstream. An extraordinary contrast with the Scillies, but both places teeming with wildlife and exuding natural peace and quiet to calm the soul.

During the morning the skipper sought to work off some of the consequences of good living by rowing back to, and up, Frenchman's Creek, where there is an interesting wreck at the entrance, a dinghy landing half-way up, and otherwise nothing apart from tranquillity and the recollection of a famous novel.



Frenchmans' Creek

The afternoon was taken up with walking from Tremayne Quay, where it's just possible to row ashore even at low tide, without getting too muddy.

Tuesday 31st August – Pendennis and Polynesia

When I was a kid my Dad bought Laa Mao Mao, a one year old 27ft polynesian catamaran , beautifully home-built to plans designed by James Wharram. She was like a great big plywood Hobie cat (although those did not exist then) with a slatted deck, flexible cross beams and tiny bunk cabins in each hull. After we doubled her sail area she went like a rocket, offshore passages averaging 10 to 12.5 knots being commonplace, though in the days before drysuits you had to wear 2 sets of oilskins, one inside the other, to stay dry. And she only drew 1 ft 6ins, with no need even for daggerboards, so you could cruise literally anywhere, including anchoring once in the tarmac'd car park at Mont St Michel. We got to know James Wharram and his family very well, so we always make a point of trying to see them when we are cruising West, though even Kingfisher can't make it up to their peaceful creek-side home at Devoran, preferring the pier at the Pandora Inn if the tide serves.

Well, it didn't, so we had them on board for dinner at the Pendennis marina, after an early trip across from Helford to Falmouth, and a lazy day's shopping, during which I picked up a book of Ed Burnett's wonderful designs at the excellent second-hand bookshop in the High Street.

James is in his 90's now but he and his design partner Hanneke Boon are still seriously active, designing, writing and sailing their lovely 63 ft Pahi catamaran Spirit of Gaia, now based in the Aegean, for up to 3 months every year. James gave us a copy of his latest book, The Sea People, and we had a memorable evening reminiscing about more or less piratical exploits in the past. They seem to have forgiven me for abandoning multihulls for monohulls, and then getting a motor yacht. James is perhaps uniquely knowledgeable among the great living boat designers and had some serious insights to offer even about the design heritage behind Kingfisher and the Silvers, reckoning that they were developed from early working motor launches.

Wednesday 1st September – Fowey

A serious punch into lots of easterly wind, leaving Falmouth at 09.20, brought us round the Dodman (well offshore) to Fowey by 13.30, securing to one of the detached pontoons opposite the lifeboat station, beautifully sheltered from the wind, and within a stone's throw of the dinghy jetty.

If we had to choose a single traditional harbour as our favourite, I think it would be Fowey. More intimate than Dartmouth, less congested on the water than Salcombe, with its own classes of classic dayboats to watch racing, two friendly yacht clubs, good shops and eateries and the most picturesque waterfront buildings. And it's still a serious commercial port, with quite big coasters regularly feeling their way through the harbour to the clay loading piers up-stream.



Big ship in little Fowey

The arrival of September seemed to produce an immediate reduction in the number of visiting cruising yachts, so we had lots of space on the pontoon. Even the tourists on staycation ashore seemed to be thinning a bit, although the weather remained superb.

As luck would have it our good friend Robert Owen was at home at his waterside cottage, so he came aboard for a leisurely dinner, to round off a delightful day. We also a chance to return hospitality to the Kate and David of Back Soon, Fowey being their home port.

Thursday 2nd September – more Fowey

The nice thing about a long cruise (in terms of time) is that you don't have to rush on if you keep your goals reasonably modest. So it was easy to give in to the charms of Fowey for another day. We were, in particular, keen to find a pair of suitably classic navigation lights to put in Kingfisher's light boxes, and there is an excellent marine antiquities shop at the southern end of the town, which had a beautiful pair of brass ones which they let us take on board to try out. Alas they were just a bit too big for us, so we reluctantly returned them.

Apart from that it was a lazy day, watching boats and ships come and go, including the beautiful topsail schooner Anny, and hoping that the now established East wind would turn round and give us a downhill ride home. But nothing doing on that front.

Friday 3rd September – Plymouth and Cotehele

Still no let-up in the Easterlies, but we couldn't stay in Fowey for ever. So at 07.30 we proceeded to Plymouth, passing sweet but swelly Polperro an hour later, having trespassed between Udder Rock and its buoy. We had a North Easterly wind blowing across a South Easterly swell. Not exactly comfortable but nothing our steadying sail couldn't cope with.

We were past Plymouth breakwater by 10.35, and alongside the fuel berth at Mayflower Marina by 11.00, in good time to have lunch at the Jolly Jack in the sunshine with Cornelius (him of Sybil, whose home port it is). Thereafter Cotehele called us up the Tamar for the night.

Cotehele is a fabulously beautiful Tudor manor house about 10 miles up the Tamar from Plymouth, complete with its own gardens, water-mill, lime kilns and quay, the home of the Shamrock, a Tamar sailing barge, still apparently undergoing a long refit to deal with the ravages of rain water on the timbers. As at Tremayne on the Helford, just down from Cotehele quay is one of the highest places up the Tamar where you can anchor and stay afloat at low tide. You have to drop the anchor in exactly the right place, and keep a lookout for large bits of waterlogged trees getting foul of it, but the birdlife is splendid, especially the owls at night, and you can be sure of being the only visitor doing a sleep-over.



Anchored in the pool, Cotehele, River Tamar

We reached Cotehele by 16.30, just too late for the tea shop on the quay, so we deferred our run ashore till the following morning.

Saturday 4th September – Morwelham



The water wheel at Morwelham Quay

We spent the morning on a walk to the Cotehele mill. Floods earlier in the year had destroyed the weir which collects water for the mill stream, so the mill itself was out of action pending repairs. But it's still a picturesque spot, and the ravages in the valley caused by the collapse of the weir had been largely cleaned up.

This year we had time to try and explore further up the Tamar, over the afternoon high tide and back on the first of the ebb. Beverly had, as a student, been part of the working party which rescued the derelict Morwelham Quay from the undergrowth, to become the major tourist attraction which it now is. It served in the 18th and 19th centuries as a major loading port for the surrounding mines, with narrow gauge railways serving the quaysides at elevated level to ease discharge into ships. It has several quays and basins, alas all silted up, a huge water wheel, a pub and a shop. We found it still strangely quiet (perhaps still a victim of the pandemic) but had plenty of time for a good look around, with Kingfisher lying anchored in the river, in the (fairly) confident expectation that nothing larger than a kayak would want to pass us going up or down.



Approaching Calstock Bridge, RiverTamar

Getting to the anchor with the last of the flood, about 4 miles up from Cotelele and under the huge stone railway bridge at Calstock, involved guessing correctly that a huge sunken tree reported 2 years earlier as blocking the fairway a mile above Calstock had been removed, or had moved on downstream. We couldn't find anyone to ask who knew the answer. It also involved turning round at Morwelham, where the river had narrowed to not much wider than Kingfisher is long. This was where tree-life got its revenge. The skipper was intent on turning Kingfisher (without a bow thruster) around in her own length without hitting either bank. So far so good, but he didn't notice the big overhanging oak sticking out across the river, which proceeded to have a not very friendly altercation with her mast. But the tree came off worst (except perhaps for the skipper's self-esteem) and we spent the next few days steaming around with an honourable oak leaf cluster adorning one of our deck downlights on the spreaders. Last season we got very proficient at lowering and raising her mast in the Norfolk Broads. This would have been a good opportunity to get back into practice, if only there had been a 'low tree' sign to warn us.



But time and tide awaits no-one, so it was back aboard at tea-time and down again past Cotehele (and a riverside house with a fierce looking plastic alligator on the lawn, see pic below) to another peaceful anchorage below Halton Quay, a mile up river from the end of the moorings where crowded marine civilisation re-starts.



We were just a bit miffed when a passer-by remarked that Kingfisher seemed a long way from the Thames. What a thing to say to a seasoned offshore seaboard, with several years in the Med to her credit, not to mention steaming home across Biscay.

A lovely day for wildlife. We saw a real kingfisher in a glorious flash of iridescent blue beneath the trees while coming down river, lots of jumping fish at Halton, and were serenaded by the hoots of the resident owls as dusk fell, with only one other boat in company.

Sunday 5th September – Dartmouth

This was our 40th Wedding Anniversary. Plans to have a celebratory dinner at a smart restaurant had failed due to pressure on bookings brought on by the pandemic. Many years previously we had celebrated in a Mirror dinghy, drifting up the river Erme at Mothecombe, starting at opposite ends of the boat and eating our way towards each other from the huge feast spread out on the centre thwart. Time for a perhaps more dignified re-run in Kingfisher, in a beauty spot on the Dart.

But first we had to get there, against the continuing Easterlies. Although the course was South-East from Plymouth we didn't expect much shelter from the swell, and had to plan our arrival at the Start to avoid the worst of wind over tide.

So we left Halton at 06.50, with an early morning mist to peer through, and a flat calm, passing the breakwater at 08.10 and reaching the Start, with visibility still only $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, at 11.35. By then the rising Easterly wind and early fair tide made it a bouncy rounding just outside the Cherrick Rocks, having to take the overfalls on the beam as we turned North. No broken crockery though, and thereafter the bank off Start Bay provided some shelter from the swell as we passed inshore of it, still in poor visibility.

We were in Dartmouth for rafting up on a friendly motor-sailer on the pontoon above the town quay at lunchtime. We prefer to go inside the town pontoon, but the magnificent sail training ship Tenacious was alongside, and berths were strictly limited.

Shopping after lunch filled the fridge with goodies, and we then motored up-river, looking for a quiet spot for a celebratory evening.

Dittisham was much too crowded, and so was Stoke Gabriel, so we ended up just below Sharpham House, again (as in the Helford and the Tamar) as far up-river as we could safely lie afloat at low tide.

Sharpham is a timelessly beautiful Georgian stately home with its own vineyard (which may be about to move), and is in full view from the anchorage where, as expected, we were entirely alone, with not even the Totnes ferry to worry about due to the lateness of the day. Our only company was a big, fat, resident seal, who seemed quite indifferent to our presence in his private fishing ground.



Celebration evening off Sharpham, River Dart

Which left us to enjoy our anniversary feast, washed down by a bottle of Chablis premier cru from another classic yacht-owning friend James Evans.

Monday 6th September – West Bay – Dartmouth to Lulworth

We needed to round the Bill mid-afternoon to catch the beginning of the eastbound tide. This meant leaving Sharpham at 07.00, this time in a proper fog. With Beverly on the bow looking for the channel markers and moored boats we crept back down-river.

Someone spotted us creeping past the Naval College and put a lovely photo of us emerging from the fog onto Instagram, with a not so lovely caption describing the skipper as an 'old boy' (!!!)

Instagram



Liked by southern.woodenboat.sailing and 142 others

sailinggarkyla Saw this old boy driving his white-ensigned launch out of the Dartmouth fog this morning ; thought he looked just the part as he passed beneath the Britannia Royal Navy College!



We were out of the entrance by 08.15, and out of the fog too, into a lovely (if slightly misty) sunny day with not a breath of wind. West Bay was like a millpond, almost all the way across.

We got a little breath from the North at 10.30, just enough to put up main and jib steadying sails, but there was truly no sea to make us pitch or roll. We didn't get a drop of spray on board for the

whole day. In weather like this there's a lot to be said for motor yachts....but we don't get it very often.



Lonely trading ketch in the mist, West Bay

We saw quite a few yachts on passage, mainly going our way, and overtook a stately trading ketch sliding along under engine, two jibs and a mizzen, presumably to avoid her big gaff main crashing about with no wind to steady it. Shortly afterwards we did a bit of Garmin electric compass swinging and autopilot tuning. This took us on a thoroughly erratic course, only a mile ahead of the ketch. They must have wondered whether we had gone mad, or drunk too much salt water too early in the day.

We could do this because we were looking like being a bit early at Portland, and the flat and empty sea made it an ideal testing ground. We're still trying to find an ideal location for the flux-gate compass which controls the autopilot and the ship's head marker on the chart plotter. It started too near both main engine alternators, where it was almost useless. So, we moved it to the forward end of our stateroom, under the bunk. But it doesn't really feel happy there either. It may be too near the metal heated towel rail in the forward head. Or maybe it's just incurably wayward.

I've been wondering why we see more boats on passage than we used to. It could just be that there are more boats around. But I think it's because of electronic navigation. We all plot the same course on our screens and then tell the autopilot to follow the route, which ours does within a remorseless 10 metre accuracy. It uses far too much helm for the purpose, however much you turn down the response control, and it's really quite unnecessary, especially in a long-keeled boat like Kingfisher with exceptional directional stability in almost any sea. The result of all this is that yachts being electronically navigated all steam (so few sail) down the same groove in the sea. You could fairly call it a yachting lane. I really wonder if this is as safe as each boat following its own idiosyncratic course, as we used to do, using DR, EP and a bit of DF, and feeling really quite proud

when we reached the right continent at the other end. On passage we have tended to revert to what we did before the autopilot was installed. You just sit comfortably at the back of the wheelhouse with a short pole, giving the wheel one or two spokes every 10 minutes or so. It keeps you alert on watch, and saves so much wear and tear on the steering gear.

The continuing slight mist meant we only sighted Portland 3.5 miles off, at 15.00, looking unusually big. But the slowing effect of the adverse tide meant that we arrived off the Bill, in the inshore passage, just on slack water. I have never seen it so calm.

We'd planned to go into Weymouth for the night, but the developing fair tide and very calm sea made Lulworth Cove a more attractive option, anchoring to the East of centre to try to avoid any easterly swell. There were too many boats in for the evening or night to be able to anchor with a stern line to the big buoy in the middle. That ensures you can lie in line with any swell coming in, and have a quiet night pitching a bit, rather than rolling your guts out. The gentle easterly had by then resumed, wafting across the Cove, so a bit of rolling was unavoidable unless a land breeze took over in the night to line us up with the entrance, from which all the swell always comes.

Meanwhile we were surrounded by admiring swimmers. It was such an idyllic evening that we soon joined them, the skipper taking the opportunity to scrub off the little green weedy moustache that builds up along the boot topping.

Sunset at Lulworth is a delight. The low cliffs at the East side of the cove are all lit up by the setting sun, glowing with a lovely russet colour below the darkening sky.



Evening sun on the cliffs, Lulworth Cove

The night proved rather eventful. The anticipated land breeze came up at about 02.00. For us it just turned a small roll into an almost imperceptible pitch as we swung to lie stern to the entrance. But for nearly everyone else it caused mayhem. Several boats thought they would foul their neighbours

or their cables. One thought she would bump her stern on a shoal. Engines, torches and nav lights went on. Boats circled around anxiously, looking for somewhere to re-anchor. One gave up in disgust and put to sea. It took more than an hour before everyone was calm again. We just watched from the warmth of the wheelhouse, hoping no-one would run into us, but with the engine ignition on, and the deck lights ready, just in case.

Tuesday 7th September – back to the Solent

Two things made us start early. First, we wanted to carry a fair tide all the way into the Solent, and it was due to turn foul mid-morning. Secondly, we wanted to clear the Lulworth firing range before they started shooting at 09.00.

Now you may think that all this emphasis on catching the tide is misplaced for the skipper of a powerful twin-engined motor yacht, well able to make progress against even the fastest tide. But we have come to regard it as at least as important as when cruising under sail. There are two main reasons for this. The first is essentially ecological. There's no real objection to using God's renewable wind to progress under sail against an adverse tide, but to burn up part of the world's finite supply of hydrocarbons for no better purpose seems seriously counter-intuitive. The second reason is that, with a cruising speed of only 8 kts, having a fair or a foul tide makes a real difference to the time spent on passage, at least by comparison with a modern power boat capable of 20 kts plus. And avoiding unnecessary tide-rips and overfalls avoids discomfort and broken china.



Early morning off Worbarrow Bay

We were off at 06.25, to witness a wonderful sunrise off Worbarrow Bay, cliffs, cloud and sea all shining silvery in the morning light, with a 10 kt North easterly wind blowing cloud and mist off the hills out to sea. We were round St Albans Head by 07.30, evading almost all the race by going really

close inshore. Then it was a quick passage across Poole Bay to enter the Solent by the North Channel and to an anchor in the Clamerkin Lake at Newtown by 10.30, for another sunny day's relaxation.

The chilling effect of September on the number of boats in the West Country had not started to impact Newtown, even on a weekday. The place was packed. All the moorings were taken, and boats were anchored close together all the way up the Clamerkin Lake to the edge of the oyster beds. But we did find a nice spot just inside the entrance and to the East, where we could watch all the comings and goings, and with a short dinghy ride to the sandbank to the West of the entrance, which is a good jumping off point for a seaside walk.

The main task was discouraging other yachts from anchoring too close for comfort, in which we largely succeeded. We find that Kingfisher with her long keel is often the first in an anchorage to respond to a new tide, swinging her stern down-tide and if necessary up-wind while the modern yachts all around with their narrow fin keels are still wind-ride, pointing the other way. This is of course in total contrast with modern high-sided motor yachts with vestigial short keels (if any). We also seem to carry much heavier ground tackle, and longer, heavier chain than they do. It takes some patient explanation to someone anchoring too close that this is going to happen. But it certainly pays dividends.



Sunset at Newtown River

Wednesday 8th September – Solent cruising, Cowes and Beaulieu.

Another early start, leaving at 08.00, enabled us to take the strong flood tide up to Cowes by 08.45, punching into a smart 20 kt gusty Easterly, in time for breakfast in the Castle and a morning shopping spree. The main item was some very expensive black oilskins for the skipper. Not because

they are often (if ever) needed in Kingfisher, but because of his very exposed leeward steering position when racing Mikado, when 100 gallons in his lap each tack is by no means uncommon.

Apart from keeping the green sea out completely, the great thing about them is their lightness and all-day comfort. Worth every penny I would say.

Our son James was on his first singlehanded cruise in Surian (described above), so we met him at the Cowes Yacht Haven to take him out for brunch (what, you say, after breakfast in the Castle? Well he had brunch and we just had a coffee).

Another beautiful day, so we ambled over to the Beaulieu River, which was again completely choc a bloc. No space in the marina and all the moorings said to be occupied. But as a member of the Old Carthusian Yacht Club, I could use the club's only asset, a private mooring one bend up from Gin's Farm. Not great for getting ashore, but very peaceful and lovely for bird watching, especially curlew, which seem to be making a bit of a come-back, thank goodness. The Easterly wind had finally run out of puff, to be replaced (too late for us) with a light South Westerly, bringing a bit of late drizzle and showers.

Thursday 9th to Sunday 12th September – mother ship duty at Hamble Classics

We had entered Mikado for the Hamble Classics weekend, so after getting out of the Beaulieu River as soon as the flood tide permitted we paused Kingfisher at Hamble to do mother ship duty, as she had done to great effect at Cowes for the British Classic Regatta in July.

This time we left it too late to book a double berth at the RSYC, but were able to use the Town pontoon (just to the South) where the harbour master's team could not have been more welcoming. There was even a 'welcome Kingfisher' board to greet us and keep interlopers off our berth.

Then it was home to Westbourne by train to do the washing and, next day, to sail Mikado round to Hamble. Sod's law dictated that the South-West wind had by then become established, giving us a tough beat from Chi to Gilkicker, and a splashy close reach from there to Hamble, to be joined in the evening by James in Surian. Quite a nice little Briggs family classic fleet.



The Briggs classic fleet at Hamble Classics

Saturday provided some sparkling racing in the central Solent, and a good party at the RSYC in the evening. But Sunday was flat calm, almost all day. The racing was cancelled and Kingfisher completed her cruise by towing Mikado all the way home to Chi Harbour, at a spanking 6.5 kts without Kingfisher's engines even breaking sweat.

Conclusions

This was a cruise which thoroughly vindicated our decision to get a classic motor yacht for cruising. The wind was either absent or on the nose for almost the whole of the cruise. Had we been in Mikado we would have had a succession of long, wet beats, separated by frustrating calms. Although we didn't need to shelter in the wheelhouse from much rain, it certainly made long windward passages infinitely more dry and comfortable. Most of the sailing yachts around us were motoring anyway. Meanwhile the generous space and facilities on board made entertaining our friends much easier and, I think, more hospitable.

Although we have always prided ourselves on sailing Mikado into the tiniest spots through the rocks and shoals, that is much easier in a twin-screw motor yacht as well. It's not that her turning circle is tighter, it isn't. Or even that her 4ft 2in draft is so much better than Mikado's 6ft 6ins. It's that under sail it's hard to stop to take stock when rock-hopping. You just can't creep along as you can under power, while deciding which side to pass the next crop of rocks and working out whether seabirds are swimming or standing on a submerged rock.

In the end, cruising Kingfisher just better suits our steadily advancing age. We still have Mikado there for the thrills and spills of competitive racing, as well as the nice day out sailing around Chi Harbour and the Eastern Solent. But for cruising in comfort, in a little ship almost as beautiful as Mikado in her different way, Kingfisher is pretty hard to beat.

Thank you John Bain for a design which has more than stood the test of time, and Silvers for building her so well, out of the finest materials not available for any money today.



Happy motor cruisers

