

# A Wight Good Easter Cruise

φφφφ 14th - 17th April 2005 φ Easter Solent/Isle of WightCruise φφφφ

The Easter Cruise has become established as a great way for starting the season, meeting up with friends and exploring the Solent area. This year was no exception, apart from the fact we had volunteered to be cruise co-ordinator this year.

The official cruise began on Good Friday but we and a number of other boats agreed to head down to Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, during Thursday and accordingly, we arrived at our base, Ocean Quay Marina on the Itchen River, late morning on Thursday 13 April and loaded up our Ribeye 785, *Cutting Edge*, with what seemed like enough bags for a three week expedition not a weekend (one drawback to having three females in our family).

We then met Barry and Penny Holme of *Mor Den II* for a bite to eat at Shamrock Quay before heading off from the Itchen in company with *Mor Den II* and the Nott family aboard their Ocean, *Black Ice*, complete with new Suzuki 250 for this season.

Heading down a bleak and wet Southampton Water with leaden skies and a Westerly force 5/6 blowing, we knew to expect a bumpy ride down the Western Solent. Sure enough, Calshot Spit lived up to its reputation of throwing up very short, sharp seas with the tide in full ebb against the Westerly wind.

We decided to follow the mainland shore whilst *Mor Den II* and *Black Ice* hugged the island coast. The seas flattened a little for us once past Beaulieu and we kept a steady 20+ knots as we carved our way through wave after wave.

The tranquillity of Yarmouth

Harbour was most welcome when we arrived and unloaded our bags on the pontoon near the lifeboat before mooring the boat and walking up to Jireh House where we were staying for the weekend.

On arrival in Yarmouth, we were also met by Jim and Hazel Cox who had arrived over from Lymington in their Revenger 27, *Flyte*, earlier in the day.

After all meeting up for a drink at The Wheatsheaf, we enjoyed dinner together at a new wine bar / bistro where we were joined later in the evening by the Barbour family who, after various challenges, had finally arrived during the evening in their Ocean 8.5m, *Stravaiga*.

### **Friday 14<sup>th</sup> April**

After a good night's sleep and a hearty cooked breakfast at our guest house, all crews met up at the harbour entrance for the agreed time of 10:15hrs on a dry but cool morning with light to moderate South Westerly winds. We were joined on *Cutting Edge* by my niece, Anna (she of the loud laugh and big character), and we all headed East down the Solent towards Portsmouth Harbour.

A very enjoyable cruise later we entered the harbour by the small boats' channel from Gillkicker Point and headed for Gunwharf Quays, where I had reserved berths for us. The small marina is in the heart of the Gunwharf Quay development which is great for the shops / restaurant / bars and by my reckoning arriving by RIB is the only way to go to the shops!

We arranged for all crews to meet at the Ha Ha bar on the waterfront at around 1pm and while some of the group hit the shops, the rest of us headed for a trip up the recently finished Spinnaker Tower. The tower was originally to be called millennium tower and no guessing when it should have been completed but with continuous delays and cost overrun it had eventually opened early this year. However, all of us that took the trip up the stunning looking tower were amazed with the views and thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience although the glass floor of the main viewing level certainly takes your breath away when first walking across it!

Whilst up the tower, we spotted various other BIBOA RIBs coming into Gunwharf including *Hot Lemon V* and *War Shot*.

After a relaxed lunch we all departed Portsmouth at about 1445hrs and headed for our next rendezvous point at Cowes Town Quay. Our son, Dan, and my niece, Anna, were delighted to have the opportunity of hitching a ride on *Hot Lemon V* – many thanks to Mike and Dave Deacon for that.

With a healthy gaggle of RIBs now rafted up on Town Quay, some crews wandered round Cowes but most of us met up at The Fountain pub on the Quay for refreshments before heading off for a gorgeous late afternoon cruise down the Western Solent back to our base at Yarmouth.

A group dinner had been booked at The Wheatsheaf pub where, considering our numbers had now swollen to well over 20, we all enjoyed an excellent meal and a very enjoyable evening, although a rather serious battle ensued between my wife, Karen, and the Holmes' guest, Paul, who had now arrived with his wife, Maureen, involving some very serious tower building using menus and drink mats. I also vaguely remember, later in the evening, a certain Bob Barbour commencing war with anyone in sight using soaked napkins as missiles!

### **Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> April**

After our mandatory cooked breakfast and enforced leisurely start (our landlord only served breakfast from 09:00hrs onwards) we all met at Yarmouth entrance, engines running at about 10:00hrs for a short blast over to Lymington.

The plan was to moor at Town Quay, peruse the excellent Saturday market and buy some nosh to take with us before heading off to Christchurch Harbour to enjoy a picnic lunch on the boats.

Unfortunately while mooring, *Mor Den II* suffered a problem with their gearbox / throttle linkage which caused some excitement in the confines of the busy Quay area but after being expertly towed to safety by *Choc Ice* (excellent boat handling Mark, very impressed) and some urgent calls to boat yards, the problem was fixed very quickly by an adept Bob Barbour (probably one of the most experienced Ocean engineers around - for all the wrong reasons!).

A little later than planned, we departed Lymington at about 13:00hrs and under grey skies and patchy drizzle headed down to Hurst Castle with a fairly brisk South Easterly breeze blowing. Being a harbour they know well, the crew of *Flyte* had offered to be "pilot boat" into Christchurch Harbour which, with the South Easterly breeze, the constantly shifting bar at the entrance and only half the channel markers having been laid, was much appreciated!

We all followed *Flyte* safely into the harbour and rafted up on the quay at Mudeford and, even though the drizzle by now had become more persistent, in true British style, we sat out and "enjoyed" our picnic lunch.

A while later, *Flyte* led us safely back out of the harbour and with the tide now dropping fast, we showed depths of only around 4 feet in some areas and headed back towards Hurst Castle and into the safety of Yarmouth. I think most crews then enjoyed some time getting back to their rooms for a hot shower before meeting for drinks and an excellent dinner at Jireh House.

Bearing in mind that as a group we effectively took over their restaurant, the sheer quality of the food served and the good humour of the staff led to a thoroughly enjoyable meal, followed for some by a nightcap at The Bugle Inn.

### **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> April**

A brighter day beckoned and with a forecast of fairly light South Westerly winds, the scene was set for our trip around the South side of the Isle of Wight, destination Bembridge on the East side of the island.

After heading out to the Needles and turning to port, we enjoyed a steady 30 knot cruise in rather sloppy conditions along the rather harsh looking shoreline of the South West side of the island. Keeping close inshore at St Catherine's, we avoided the worst of the tidal overfalls and, after heading more North Easterly once past St Cats, enjoyed a notably smoother ride past Ventor.

We stopped in the lee of the island near Shanklin and rafted up for some jelly babies and drinks and presented Penny on *Mor Den II* with her Easter egg before continuing on to Bembridge Harbour.

The very helpful harbour masters guided us by launch up to berths they had held for us in the far marina which was close to the Brading Haven Sailing Club, who were expecting our group for lunch. We were again joined in Bembridge by an excellent fleet of additional RIBs to include the Scorpions *Hot Lemon V* and *Dragons Revenge*, Gary Tickner, Gordon Compton and Jan and all had a relaxing lunch in the picturesque Bembridge.

After departing the harbour by the winding but well marked channel, we cruised in company back along the North shore of the island, breaking the return journey to Yarmouth by a short stop at Cowes.

Another excellent group dinner was held at The Bugle Inn who had laid up tables for us in a separate dining area which was probably sensible given our overall behaviour! Karen and I made a few announcements of cruise awards that we felt should be given out and, in the absence of any medals or cups, each award recipient received a high quality, individual packet of relish of their choice from the basket on the table. A full list of awards can be provided to anyone wishing to make bids!

### **Monday 17<sup>th</sup> April**

We had planned a trip to Swanage for an early lunch but it was decided, given most boats had to be back in the Southampton area for lifts during the afternoon, to amend the plan. Accordingly, *Black Ice* headed back to the Itchen

soon after breakfast while the rest of us had a leisurely run up to The Folly Inn on the Medina where the food and service was as good as usual.

After lunch and saying our goodbyes, we all departed the Medina and headed for our respective homes and departure ports – another Easter Cruise complete and one that we as a family had certainly thoroughly enjoyed (save for a persistent cough and chest pain that I was informed the next day by my doctor was a cracked rib!).

The cruise was very sociable, relaxed and proved a great start to what we hope is a fantastic boating season for everybody.

## **The Norman family**

RIB *Cutting Edge*