

Rallies report – Cruising Section

The Rally is one of the enduring features of the Cruising Section's year and by no means confined to what is traditionally seen as the "sailing season". The programme of rallies is pulled together by the Cruising Section Committee and then organised and lead by volunteers. Sometimes a rally is a meeting of old friends who have often cruised together in company but so often it also creates friendships between members who may have never met before.

Frostbite

For the Parkstone Cruising Section the year begins early. For years now it has become a tradition that virtually immediately after the New Year break there is a cruise in company to the Solent. For obvious reasons it is known as "The Frostbite".

The 2019 Frostbite went very well with no hitches. Three boats - *Calero*, *Aquila* and *Royal Sapphire* - made the trip with a total of eight crew. Weather was good with fresh winds, no rain and good visibility. It was cold – predictably - but not freezing.

The flotilla of hardy souls left the Parkstone around 0800 hrs on the Friday. N/NE F4 winds meant a close-hauled sail all the way to Hamble arriving at 1500 hrs. On Saturday as planned the three boats had another windward beat – this time into NW - and rafted up together in the Beaulieu river from where they made their way to Lymington.

As the sun began to set all three arrived at Lymington Town Sailing Club and berthed as agreed. The Club had kindly reserved a table for the PYC contingent who, after supper, made up a team for the Quiz Night coming a healthy fourth which was probably diplomatic given the number of LTSC members in contention.

Sunday morning saw the flotilla leaving before the sun came up. The forecast for the day was for NE 4 gusting 7 which indicated a lively trip home. Motoring passed Hurst Point all three sailed from North Head buoy back to Poole.

Keyhaven Walk

Not strictly a rally but after intrepid winter activity on the water our cruising members took to dry land in February when Graham Reed organised a Winter Walk at Keyhaven.

Despite some early morning rain 24 members turned up for the walk. As forecast the weather improved and by the time the group set off it was grey, but dry.

Graham had kept the walk short - about 3 miles - to encourage participation. The walk included part of the sea wall towards Lymington. Most had seen it from the Solent but few had walked it before. Most of the route was firm but wet with a short stretch of softer going, just to make it interesting!

The circular walk brought everyone back to Keyhaven YC, where they were welcomed by the club's Commodore, then sat down to a much-appreciated lunch looking over the Solent towards Yarmouth.

Early Channel Dash

For the intrepid members of our Cruising Section the Early Channel Dash to Cherbourg in early April is an energising start to the season. Although nine boats had indicated their intention to participate only three eventually made it. The forecast for the planned day of departure was grim – 25 to 30 knots of SE wind.

Pelican decided to make the crossing a day earlier but *Aquila* braved the elements. *Thais* opted to wait for a forecast drop in the wind speed and ended up motoring most of the way. All of the crews enjoyed a relaxing day in Cherbourg and a fine dinner – as our cruising members always seem to organise – at the La Marina restaurant. All three boats enjoyed an uneventful return to Poole.

Easter Bembridge Rally

Next up was the Easter Rally to Bembridge organised by Maggie and Kevin Cullimore which attracted 18 PYC yachts many of which made the most of the good weather for this first Solent foray of the season. Dinner – always a highlight of Cruising Section rallies - at the Brading Haven YC attracted 38 skippers and crew.

Christchurch Cruise

The Christchurch Cruise in May, organised by Malcolm Bell, was lucky with the weather with a favourable wind there and back. A total of 7 boats made the cruise. However, whilst the tide allowed passage up the run and along the river without a problem, return on Sunday was a different matter. Most boats waited until 14.30, which was mid tide, before leaving and even then, one could feel the mud.

Christchurch Sailing Club was its sociable norm and an excellent meal was enjoyed by 27 skippers and crew.

Rally to Weymouth

The May Bank Holiday rally to Weymouth, organised by Phil Simmonds, also attracted a sizeable fleet of PYC boats with 16 rafting up on the quay. There was one uncomfortable night when the wind freshened from the NE sending short seas into the harbour. During the few days the fleet spent at Weymouth the lifeboat was called out twice – once to tow in a dismasted yacht and then to bring in a fishing boat in trouble!

The Portland Rally that never was!

The rally was arranged by Alan Butcher for early August and 24 boats and 44 people booked to attend.

The weather, however, turned nasty – winds gusting F9-10 were eventually recorded - and unfortunately the event had to be cancelled as had happened the previous year!

Attempting to salvage something for the Saturday evening meal, 23 members drove to Portland and saved some embarrassment for cancelling their group restaurant booking for the second time.

Yarmouth BBQ – August Bank Holiday

Peter Taylor is the guiding hand behind this traditional PYC cruising event but was unable to make it to Yarmouth in 2019 so asked former Cruising Section Captain John Pettit to act as “man on the spot” who arrived a day early in *Bugs Bunny*.

Next day the fleet began to assemble as, in no particular order *Riamara*, *Kaniklani*, *Zingaro*, *Solent Kestrel*, *Equinox*, *Pure Promise*, *Sulito*, *High Spirits*, *Ronja*, *Elixir*, *Bonus*, *Calero*, *Appreciation*, *Narnia*, *Dawn Flyer* and *Space 8* arrived in quick succession joined the next day by *Palomino* and *Tom Boy*.

Reception drinks were held on the Pontoon before the majority of crews adjourned to the Royal Solent Yacht club for an excellent meal.

The time for the BBQ was at 16:00 and everyone chose to walk to the usual spot rather than inflate their tenders. In total there were 42 skippers and crew cooking and eating merrily which may be close to a record.

A good number of boats decided to head back to Poole on the Sunday leaving fairly early to catch the ebb through the Hurst Narrows. The winds were light and there was very little actual sailing on the way back.

Late Cherbourg Dash

The early response for the September Dash to Cherbourg this year was very thin but as the day of crossing approach more interest appeared and resulted in an enjoyable weekend. *Equinox*, which departed the harbour 07.00 saw a Northerly wind build to 28 knots once clear of the land. Progress was quick but not comfortable. *Bugs Bunny* left a couple of hours later and had less of the strong northerly winds. *Optimised* and *Cara* both sailed quickly across on Friday with F6 westerlies giving a beam reach and lumpy seas. Both were happy to arrive and pleased with the experience for themselves and their crew.

Drinks were held in the sunshine on *Equinox* Saturday and the conversations soon started between people who had never met and continued around the dinner table of the Cherbourg Yacht Club well into the evening. Rallies like this often create bonds between members who arrive as strangers and leave as friends.

The winds on Sunday were back in the north which meant more motor sailing until closing the Dorset coast and a reach back into the harbour.

Lymington Town Rally

With plans awaiting final approval this was probably the last visit by the Cruising Section to Lymington before the planned revamp of the Town Quay and waterside area planned for 2020.

Varied sailing conditions following Storm Lorenzo resulted in a strong breeze downwind on Friday, light air and sun on Saturday, a strong breeze upwind on Sunday and a fresh southerly breeze with a touch of rain on Monday. Sixteen yachts made the trip with other crews joining up to total 40 for dinner at Lymington Town Sailing Club.

Fireworks Cruise

The annual November 5th Fireworks Cruise to Weymouth, organised by Nigel Wrigley, is the final Cruising Section rally of the year.

On November 2nd 95knots were recorded at The Needles but by the 4th a weather window appeared and five boats prepared to sail.

On the 4th *Serenade* met lumpy seas left over from the stormy weekend but the morning of 5th November dawned clear with a forecast F4-5, N and *Ruby Max*, *Thais*, *Equinox* and *Appreciation* left for a glorious sail.

Even at St Albans ledge the water was like a mill-pond. All boats were moored up in Weymouth soon after 14:00. Crews de-camped at 18:00 for Weymouth Sailing Club for an early supper and then walked to the beach to enjoy a close view of the bonfire and fireworks display.

On the 6th the tide allowed crews leisurely breakfasts before casting off around 10:00 with forecast sunny periods and wind of F2-3, SE which veered to S. Showers did arrive later but did not affect an enjoyable mixture of sailing and motoring home after a very pleasant winter break.

Solent Jumble

The Club's participation in the annual Solent Boat Jumble, organised as ever by Richard Drew, raised £528 for the Commodore's Charity.

