

Blog 2 comes from Falmouth, yachting centre of the 'Kingdom of Cornwall'..... yes, it's perfectly true, there is a rather delightful county at the far western end of our country! But getting here has been a very different story with up to 30 knots on the nose all the way from Chichester harbour.

Our first port of call after the two day sojourn at Hayling Island waiting for the storm to pass was Yarmouth, and we needed to beat down the western Solent into a typical short chop that Theo's Future rode remarkably well. But we were perilously low on fuel and with the Yarmouth - Lymington ferry leaving the dock, we rather nervously edged our way in against the strong ebb current hoping (& praying!) that our meagre remains would suffice.... much to our relief it did, and we coasted up to the fuel dock on vapour..... the petrol had gone!!

The harbour master gave us a very warm welcome and waved the fee! His night watch were just as generous and prepared sandwiches from the overnight ration for us as the pubs were shut..... or nearly so until we discovered a 'lock-in' at a certain establishment (name withheld for obvious reasons!) and the landlady, enjoying her late night cigarette, took pity on 2 soggy dishevelled creatures from the deep..... that first pint of draught Becks barely touched the sides! Then back for our midnight feast (which earned the delightful night staff Fight for Sight T shirts and pens...). How kind was that!

Up at 0500hrs next morning we were greeted by rising SW breezes and we were soon in the thick of it.... The 3 metre standing waves off the Needles/Shingles Bank were awesome; quite frankly we (Dick Pratt and me) shouldn't really have been there, but Dick is used to heavy weather on his surfboard (he spends his whole life searching for it!!) and we plodded on, hour after hour at under 3 knots.

In the end, our attempts to reach Weymouth proved fruitless and, as we seemed to be pointing at Poole, we decided to head there instead! But as we happily headed shorewards we were reminded of the treacherous sand bar outside the harbour by the Brittany Ferry whose wash caused the breakers to appear quite close on our port side (thanks Mr Ferry!) We arrived at Poole town quay, and within minutes we were drinking post wedding Beaujolais with some Sapper friends from the REYC, Mark and Alison Tilley, who had abandoned their attempt to reach Cherbourg in their Bavaria 38, a huge yacht compared to ours!

But the best was yet to come as Caroline Harding whipped Dick and I away to their lovely Dorset farmhouse for baths and a scrummy supper at the Anchor pub near the the River Stour - big thanks to Caroline and Tim!! Caroline appeared with our washing at 0600hrs next morning as we departed for Weymouth (second time lucky!).

No sooner were we round Old Harry than we hit the race off St Albans Head... exciting stuff as we were buffeted by eddies and standing waves... but Theo's Future took it all in her stride.... what a fabulous and forgiving little yacht she is. But all was not over as we were accosted by the Lulworth Ranges safety boat who requested that we tack over to avoid the range danger area. As an ex Army man, I know just how irksome it is when yachts stray into the danger area and delay shooting (you just don't need a 105mm shell through the mainsail!) but I'm afraid I put my foot down in the interests of safety at sea; quite frankly, I just wasn't prepared to tack into the full bore of the St Albans race and, to be fair, the safety

boat coxswain took my point and, having agreed not to bear away any further, I was allowed to proceed with caution (hoping our sails would survive anything the main battle tanks might throw our way!!) And so into Lulworth Cove for 'lunch' and what a welcome respite that was. We finally reached Weymouth at 1900hrs and Dick departed, but not before I had warmly thanked him for being such a superb heavy weather crew.

No sooner had Dick left than my old sapper friend, Patrick Clarke, appeared on the scene and what a delight it was to see him. We have sailed and raced boats together for more than 30 years and his appearance at the Weymouth Town Quay lifted my somewhat sagging morale. With Pat around, I knew that I could tackle Portland Bill with renewed confidence and so it was..... up early to catch the tide and Pat sailed Theo's Future round the 'Bill' just under the lighthouse... but keeping a good look-out for semi-submerged lobster pots that can easily ruin your whole day.... Lyme Bay seemed to go on for ever and the wind was still not being particularly kind to us as we ended pointing, not towards our destination, Brixham, but towards Exmouth which, despite having the Commando Training Centre at nearby Lympstone (yes, I was an instructor there from 1970-72!) was not really where we wanted to go.

However, we were running low on fuel and this seemed as good an option as any. But, amazingly, the breeze suddenly came in from the North West and after a gentle nudge from Pat along the lines of... "no, Brookie, you can't drink beer with your old Royal Marine mates today..." we sped off towards Brixham on a reach, the first time we had been 'off the wind' and under full plain sail in the whole voyage!

However, our elation was soon tempered with the reality that the engine simply would not start (probably water in the fuel from heeling over in the long bouts of heavy weather when the air vent may have let some in. But I have a simple and straightforward expression in such circumstances.... "we are where we are!" And we entered Brixham Harbour under sail, rounded up into wind and dropped the hook, just as the old Brixham trawlers might have done.... no worries at all. A short alongside tow later from Neil the Harbour Master, and we were safely tucked up in Brixham Marina, absolutely knackered but happy to have made it, more or less, in one piece.

And what a lovely reception we got from so many of Jayne's family, kids and all. Judi wasted no time in getting us off to her delightful flat for wonderful baths and a simply delicious midnight feast.... for by then it was gone midnight! Thanks also to Simon and Claire for doing our washing and drying out the pair of pretty damp sleeping bags (sorry we had to wake you in the middle of the night to collect them!)

Next morning we got the outboard fixed by the very competent and helpful Yamaha service agent in Kingswear and, yes, the ingress of salt water had polluted the fuel supply.... never again if we can help it. More good news at Brixham, as Jilly Rumble from Fight for Sight joined us for the trip to Falmouth via Dartmouth and Salcombe.... more of that adventure next time... last, not least, the Brixham Harbour Master was utterly superb in his support for the cause; Neil, many thanks again and again for all your kind and unstinting help.

And finally, a thousand thanks to all our shoreside supporters/close family members and a special thanks to my personal minders Chal Chute & Nick Sherman.

Fair Winds and love to one and all,

Mike