

David's view as a crew

As I stepped aboard "Theos Future" one problem for me became immediately obvious. I'm short and stout and the entrance to the cabin with spray hood up is very restrictive. Mike who is tall gave me a demo' of the entry method. "What you do David is go in head first, put your hands on the center board case and crawl in on your hands and knees". "OK" I said with a very unconvinced tone in my voice, "I'll give it a go". It was never going to work for me – apart from the fact my short arms could hardly reach the center board it was killing my knees. Next I tried the feet first method on my back. That worked but only just, and I couldn't imagine doing it at sea. However I was now in the cabin with the problem of how I was going to get out. With great difficulty was how my thought processes were not progressing. I came up with what for me was the obvious solution. I put my hands on the cockpit seats and my feet up on the centerboard and just walked out on all fours. It worked in reverse order for getting in; this solved the cabin problem. Jilly Rumbling-Rambling-Rummaging-Raging-Rumble had solved her similar problem by building a nest in the forepeak with her own private entrance through the fore hatch.

After a 'Chinese' take away and beers in the Yacht Club my method of exit and entry needed to be tested at 0315 for the following reason. I knew there was a 'porta loo' on board, but it was well and truly buried under Jilly's nest, so us lads who can't go through the night without relief have to slip into the cockpit to use the 'porta bailer' to ease springs. Anyway I slipped out and in like a cat after the cream. (Where is this blog leading to).

After a gay (in the true sense of the word) little sail in a southerly force 5 across the Wash, Theos Future was now nearing Wells-next-the-sea. We had acquired a harbour pamphlet at Grimsby, that had a pretty good looking well lit entrance plan of the twisty mud and banks on both sides of the two mile entrance to Wells.

It also said that visitors should contact the harbour master who would come out by boat to pilot you in (no charge) and on no account should entry be attempted at night. Here we were at 2000 at the safe water mark with Mike at the helm, Jilly spotting flashing buoys, and me with torch and pamphlet at the ready and Mike saying, "I have every confidence in you David". "We'll be fine", I reply trying to sound as if it will be a breeze.

The first bit was easy, all the buoys lit and in a line. Seas were braking just out of the channel to starboard and the next buoy was close to the beach and the GPS put us behind the lookout hut well and truly on land (much better by eye). At this point the lights on most of the buoys had been replaced with day glow strips with just the odd one lit. However we progressed well at very low speed until sharp-eyed Jilly said, "What's that ahead". I shone the torch on a steep bank and almost simultaneously said, "hard to star" - Mike had turned before the - "board" bit came out. Almost at the same time a signal lantern from ashore was giving us the old 'Watch the wall my darlings while the gentlemen go by', signal. To which we replied in my best Morse, 'no baccy or brandy'. But we still got a very warm welcome from Roy and Sheila Sherlock who very generously took us straight to a local hostelry for a wonderful welcoming meal.

After a 'bone and idle' lie in and a quizzical look from the harbour master about our entry, my stomach turned towards the harbour café which we had been well informed did an 'all day breakfast' masses of cholesterol meal. Mike tried his best to put me off such an appalling idea, although Jilly was not against the idea. Anyway a little later Mike was requesting extra fried bread and we were tucking into very large 'Full Houses'. Because we were running a day late, Jilly had to fly the nest and return to work. I always thought work was for people who didn't go sailing. Well I suppose some one has to do it.

Next day at 0530ish we were joined by Roy for the day sail down to Lowestoft. We left under power with a small yacht just astern. She soon overtook us and disappeared out of sight. After three hours the tide turned and we motor-sailed close to the beach. Actually veryyyyy close, but with only half a knot of foul tide against us instead of the two and half knots off shore. Well low and behold just before Great Yarmouth (where we were given at least 150 reasons not to visit by the Grimsby folk) well out to sea, there was the same small yacht almost stationary plugging the strong tide. She went into Great Yarmouth astern of us, leaving us just a bit chuffed with our cunning nav' plan. Anyway just as we were entering Lowestoft, the dear harbour controller changed the control lights from green to red for a large fishing vessel leaving harbour. We entered after doing a quick 360 degree turn and were greeted by the ever cheerful Chaloner (Chal) Chute (spelt something like that), (I think). Once again it was the high cholesterol fish and chip supper with the Sherlock's before Roy left with Sheila and daughter Emily for home.

Two days of mud hopping followed, under the guidance of local lad Chal as we proceeded with the tide under us for a change up the Ore to Ordford where my next challenge concerning the Avon dinghy was about to unfold. "How are you going to get in David" inquired Mike in a kind of off hand manner. After considerable thought I replied, "very carefully". I duly did that bit with what I call considerable style. However getting back on board after a pint or two of Admans finest was a bit of an event. No, I didn't fall in but I did make a rather undignified sort of half backwards tumble roll into the cockpit, much to the amusement of Mike and Chal. The next day I adopted the sit on the side of the cockpit, swivel round method, which gave the impression that I really knew what I was doing for our trip ashore to buy stores and visit the church where Mike's uncle Ken had been the vicar in the 50's and 60's. We gathered from some older boatmen that he was a popular character and a good shot.

Onwards to the River Deben past the Felixstowe Ferry Sailing Club and up eight miles to Woodbridge where the Deben YC Commodore Simon guided us in. Chal jumped ship here - he was a great sailing companion who bravely put up with Mike and my Marine reminiscences. We were given the keys to the club (which is the second oldest in England and stands on stilts) so that we could use all their facilities including the kitchen. We therefore had the full egg and bacon toast marmalade and marmite breakfast before setting off for Shotley, where I was due to jump ship.

At Shotley John and Maureen Whelton and Terri (the Moore family ocean widow) met us. John and Maureen entertained us to a very slap up supper in their Ipswich home. After supper, Mike bade farewell and returned to his ship to go through the 'this is how you get in the cabin' routine 'may be' again to the new crew joining in the morning.

This was an interesting and challenging sail in Mike's wonderful little Gaff Cutter, which sails beautifully.

Thanks Mike for inviting me and I will always remember the Wash.

David Moore