

SUMMER PASSAGE ON MOONRIVER

JUNE 2006

June 2006 arrived with blue skies and sunny days for our 2006 Summer passage on Moonriver.

The second sailing season for our new Y23 Gaff Cutter began in Yarmouth harbour for the annual 'Old Gaffer's Festival' where we joined 4 other Y23 boats from the club, Tarka, Hecate, Louisa, and Jabiru.

Yogaff 2006 had a French theme with stalls on the harbourside, along with all the usual musical entertainment. It was a good weekend with much fun and socialising including a very enjoyable and interesting Yar river trip on two of David Lemonius's launches to visit the private Ferguson Museum, arranged for us all by Sally.

Moonriver left Yarmouth harbour on the early morning tide in flotilla with Tarka, Louisa, Hecate to sail through the Hurst Channel into the North Channel and on down to Poole in light winds, where we all dropped anchor in South Deep overnight, the evening sunset was beautiful.

Early morning again we bade farewell to Louisa and Hecate (they planned to explore the river up to Wareham) and sailed Moonriver to Weymouth along with Geoff and Jaye on Tarka. We took the inner channel around St. Alban's Head and the winds being South Westerly Force 2, we both hoisted our mainsails and motor sailed for a few hours until we felt an increase in the wind and were able to let out our stay and jibs, turn off the engine and sail for a few hours. At one stage we both headed inshore for a closer look at the interesting Jurassic coastline at Worbarrow Bay to the East of Lulworth Cove.

After a night on board in Weymouth harbour, we both set off at 6am to motor around the Bill of Portland, blessed with calm seas and sightings of puffins and auks.

Crossing Lyme Bay even with the coastline almost hidden by mist, we saw many interesting seabirds, black guillemots, manx shearwaters and fulmars. After motor sailing all morning we were glad of an increased southerly wind in the early afternoon which enabled us to have a good though blustery sail for the rest of our passage to Dartmouth.

Entering a new harbour for us, is always a special experience and Dartmouth was no exception. On our passage in, we glided past the Mew Stone which was full of nesting seabirds. We moored in Darthaven Marina at Kingsweir with a lovely view of Dartmouth across the river. During our stay there the four of us met with Philip and Lindsay Charlesworth, new Y23 owners of 'Kitty', with whom we spent a very enjoyable evening at their home, set high on a hill above the River Dart.

My sister and brother-in-law then joined us for two days, we walked the hills and coastline around Kingsweir, visited 'Greenway,' home of the late Agatha Christie and had a really enjoyable evening cruise on Moonriver up the river Dart as far as Dittisham. En route we were able to view the Victorian Boathouse, where Greenway gardens met the water's edge and were lucky enough to see the familiar sight of the grey hunchback heron.

Having explored the area for a few days Tarka and Moonriver sailed further on down the west coast to Salcombe keeping to the inner channel around Start Point. There was quite a swell in the sea that day, a sight to remember was watching Tarka disappearing intermittently below the waves with only her top rigging visible!

Using our GPS we then found the narrow channel into Salcombe after passing Prawl Point. Salcombe river offers plenty of buoys for visitors' to moor but the harbour master suggested 'The Bag' area further up river as a quiet spot for overnight moorings. After rafting up together, the four of us had a trip ashore on the water taxi

to discover the small town of Salcombe and find a restaurant for a farewell meal as the time had sadly come to part company. Tarka had to begin the return passage to her home port, Poole. Geoff and Jaye left on the early morning tide next day and that evening Tim and I motored further up river in our tender to Kingsbridge to have a look around.

Next day arrived sunny with clear skies so we walked along the coast to South Sands and continued up the hill to the 'Overbeck' estate, overlooking the Salcombe estuary, previous home of Otto Overbeck, inventor of 'The Rejuvenator' machine, a most peculiar invention, apparently guaranteed to prolong youth. The gardens contained rare and exotic plants that grow well in the sheltered microclimate.

Time had finally come for us to set off on Moonriver for our return passage. We left Salcombe at 8.30am in dull, cloudy weather, so again kept close to Start Point and Black Stone on our port side with the Skerries Bank to starboard. We headed for Slapton Sands on a broad reach with the sun appearing through the clouds and a good wind shift which enabled us to make for Homestone Rock and Dartmouth.

A day later found us sailing to Brixham passing round Berry Head with sightings of more puffins flying in and nesting on the rocks below. The weather predictions were slowly changing with increased winds so we left Brixham after two days, for a very fast exhilarating sail to Torquay. The visitors' moorings there were quite close to the harbour entrance and as the winds were up to Force 7 by evening, Moonriver was swinging and rolling well. At one point during that night, I have to admit to abandoning ship for a few hours to a bench seat in the launderette/ladies' shower area! My skipper was not impressed but the kind harbour master even offered to carry the bench into the ladies to give me more privacy, however, I declined and rejoined Moonriver as soon as the winds had died down somewhat.

Bad weather then kept us in port for several days but as soon as the winds decreased and skies cleared Moonriver left Torquay at 6am one morning keeping the Ore Stone on our portside and headed for Weymouth in smooth seas with another calm passage around the Bill of Portland and on into Weymouth harbour. After spending two pleasant days meeting up with friends and taking a bus ride to visit Portland Castle we decided to continue making our way back to the IOW.

On ringing the Portland Coastguard prior to leaving next day and finding that Lulworth firing range was in operation, Tim set our GPS waypoints to -
Lat 50 30 00N, Long 02 09 22W

Lat 50 33 08N, Long 02 06 21W in order to sail offshore and keep clear of the firing range, as recommended in the 'Shell Pilot Guide to the English Channel' by Tom Cuncliffe. This was definitely a good move as the patrol boat was much in evidence, checking for any boats that had strayed into the firing area.

After several hours of motoring, heading into the wind to make our waypoints, we were able to change tack and broad reach in a South Easterly across Poole Bay but on entering the Hurst Channel we experienced a freak wave, which washed over our boat and us. Rather wet, we reached our homeport of Yarmouth IOW with the stress factor of only 10 minutes to spare to enter the harbour and catch the last bridge lift to reach our mooring up the River Yar!

On later reflection, as June was so hot with a distinct lack of wind, when on the helm I found myself chasing the slightest ripple. Do women chase the wind?

Tim wanted to change our boat name to suit (ie 'Chase the Wind') but then we remembered the joy of hearing a certain Torquay harbour master singing 'Moonriver' to us over the VHF radio as we approached, it was too memorable, as was our 2006 Summer passage.