

The Studland Rally, July 4th and 5th 2009

"Well the weather looks good with SW to S which is good for anchoring in Studland: sunny, 20C, and doesn't get dark until nearly 10pm" said Denny. So did the Met Office and sundry other forecasts, so could we possibly have the weather gods on our side for once?

Vivien and James had invited us to stow away on Emmalyn, their lovely Hustler 30, and we agreed to meet up at Hardway, spend the night on Emmalyn, and head off early the next morning. Senitoa with Maurice, Barbara, Hadyn and Christine left Friday and were anchored in Studland as were Andromeda with Jorgen, Nicola and Jim returning from the West. Liberté with Denny, Julie, Marianna and Keira, set off on Friday evening and anchored off Hampstead. Manic with Nick and Maria, and were expected during Saturday afternoon.

The plan was for us to all meet up by the cliffs between the beaches at 6pm on Saturday for the barbeque. Emmalyn was off moorings at 7.00 am – as planned! - and we motored down Portsmouth Harbour with not a breath of wind and out into the Solent. We were glad we had brought oilies as there were a couple of short showers, but soon the sun broke through and we ran down the Solent in fine form. All was quiet, and, Gentle Readers, your author has to admit to feeling exceedingly relaxed to the point where the early start and the sea-sick pills forced her to rest her eyes while reclining on one of Emmalyn's comfy bunks. I missed the getting-up of the breeze and was only dimly aware of the sails going up, when, after a mere moment's rest I returned to the cockpit to find us only about an hour short of Studland (now, how did that happen?).

Afternoon arrivals. We hadn't seen any of the other GCCC boats yet, but as we sailed by Old Harry Rocks (very beautiful in the golden afternoon light), we passed Andromeda, Jorgen's Nicholson 35, riding at anchor and looking very handsome. We could see a Rival in the distance heading for the meeting place, and by the time we got there we were welcomed by Liberté with Denny, Julie, Marianna and, of course, Keira. Marianna was to return on Andromeda, while Liberté continued west. By this time, the rest of the crew were feeling tired (Denny, Julie et. al. after a swim had gone for a healthful and invigorating walk along the cliffs to Old Harry and downed a rather less healthy Dorset Cream Tea). Emmalyn's crew was rather less hearty and Mike, shortly followed by James and even the turbo-charged Vivienne, hit the sack. I caught a few 'z's in the cockpit so I could pretend I had been Alert and Vigilant all the time.

When we finally came round to the sound of an outboard, we found Denny visiting our neighbours in their Dehler 34, Little Albatross. We hadn't realized that they were potential new members, having come on the rally to check us out. Little Albatross's crew consist of Thorsten and Britta, plus their son of 20 months, Henry.

As 6pm came around, a variety of rubber dinghies headed toward the beach and the crews of Liberté, Andromeda, Little Albatross, Manic and Senitoa started up their barbeques in a cloud of smoke that fortunately quickly settled down. We were especially delighted to see Maurice. Henry entertained us all by pottering round the beach finding interesting things and decorating his mum with sand, and Keira, who couldn't understand why we were all standing round talking when she had such an excellent stick that we could throw for her, presented each one of us in turn with it. She didn't have much luck and eventually got tied to one of the dinghies. A grand evening indeed.

Ladies Who Launch. While downing the barbeque, a plot was being hatched: how about taking an all-woman boat to a rally? Denny and Julie offered (trustingly) to contribute Liberté, Jorgen wasn't quite so sure about Andromeda, but hey, the man is in

love with her after all. Jorgen would prefer to lurk discreetly in the cockpit, chewing his nails, ready, like Perseus, to leap in to save Andromeda as the ladies prepared to mount pontoons/ground on the Brambles/ram the IOW ferry. Odd how the chaps seem to manage OK on their own.

Mike was all for it; but then not many women could pile onto Brio anyway. Mike made sensible suggestions: could it perhaps be arranged on a per-rally basis, allocating volunteer boats like Liberté to all-women crews, maybe just for the voyages themselves, with overnight arrangements reverting to 'the ownership'? Or could we operate in pairs, the chaps on one boat and the ladies on the other?

Sunday departures. Andromeda had very sensibly decided to leave at 4am on the Sunday, to catch the tide, and Liberté was carrying on westward for a short break in the West Country, but, as we in Emmalyn had been up at 05.20 for the weather forecast on Saturday, Mike's suggestion that we should be up and away at Silly o'clock for the tide, like Andromeda did, was not met with enthusiasm. Hey, we could buck the tide, it was only just after neaps anyway, let's have a lie-in.

Meanwhile, Andromeda sensibly left at 4.30 and steamed back in no time at all, a lovely sail, with the tide under her.

Thorsten had swum over to us to say hello and had hardly got back on board Little Albatross, when a RIB roared between our two boats at 25 knots or so, towing a water-skier. We were all rather shaken by the crass stupidity of going through an anchorage at that speed – goodness knows what might have happened had Thorsten still been in the water.

We finally got away around 11am and sailed pleasantly back east on a broad reach, planning to take the Needles Channel, despite the inevitable wind-over-tide effect. All went well, and we went on a run as we approached the channel, until we encountered, as expected, a pretty hefty dose of said wind-over-tide. Emmalyn bravely sailed on as the sea became more and more like the inside of a liquidizer, huge greenies sneaked up behind us (Emmalyn would have none of it, she just tucked them under her stern and got on with it), and James went below to get the straps to clip on with. Bad Idea. After a couple of minutes he shot back up into the cockpit at light speed and headed aft, where he spent the next twenty minutes horizontal, inspecting the rudder. We thought of hiding in Alum Bay until the tide turned, but by the time we got there the sea had calmed miraculously (perhaps Neptune was propitiated by James's sacrifice of his breakfast), the sun came out and we all felt much better. James perked up, took the helm and sailed us all the way back to Portsmouth as if nothing had happened. Thorsten had the best idea (and the original plan for the rally) to leave about 2.00pm punch a little tide and arrive at Hurst when the tide turned, albeit they were only going to Lymington.

Yet another example of careless stupidity occurred then: a kite-surfer, obviously very competent (at kite-surfing), had been hurtling around by the Island shore, great fun to watch, but not so much fun when he suddenly shot around our stern, the line from his kite barely missing the top of our mast. He was watching it, so one can only hope that he got as big a fright as we did. The idiot disappeared as fast as he could, with a selection of appropriate phrases from Mike following him. Don't these people get told not to do these things as part of their training? Don't they realize how stupidly dangerous it is? Is there somebody they could be reported to?

Despite rabid RIBs and crazed kite-surfers, what a lovely weekend that was: our thanks to Denny & Co. for organising it. See you all at the next one.

Sue

PS. Our photos are on photobucket.