

## DIARY OF A WEEK LONG DAYBOAT VENTURE

### **Day 1 - Oldbury to Minehead**

The intention was to start from Oldbury on- Severn, being Thornbury Sailing Club HQ., on the night tide of Friday, 9th July 1971, but, probably after too many drinks at the Anchor, in launching the boat we ran off the jetty and had to leave the boat overnight suspended in mid air with one wheel on and one wheel off the jetty. Anyhow, the next morning at about 9 a.m., we succeeded in floating DB 122 "Pippin" and set off along the river bank towards the Severn Bridge, through the notorious shoots off Chepstow and on towards our destination which we felt would probably be Minehead, roughly 60 miles. The winds were light and we had to use the engine (1.5 h.p. clapped out Evinrude) from the shoots to Clevedon. Setting course for Minehead, visibility poor and without any wind we continued on the motor. Off Steepholme we decided we would not be able to make Minehead and headed for Watchet. Arrived about low tide at 6.00 p.m. anchored, moored to the jetty barely inside the harbour and went ashore for a couple of drinks and a bite. It was a beautiful, still, sunny summer evening so we proceeded to motor very leisurely; along the coast close in as the tide was against us to Minehead where the local sailing club (who have 17 Dayboats) kindly let us sleep on the floor of their club house.

### **Day 2 - Minehead to Ilfracombe**

Next day we had very similar conditions: little wind and visibility even worse. We sailed out just before W.W. about 9.30 a.m. and set a course westerly towards Foreland Point but had to take the sails down and use the motor. Visibility was very bad now and we estimated our time of arrival off the Foreland at 1 p.m. We could hear the fog horn very clearly but we were out of sight of land all the way. In fact, the first land we saw was Foreland Lighthouse but no sooner had we seen it than our engine petered out. Meanwhile we lost sight of the lighthouse and proceeded to row into Lynmouth setting the compass on a southerly course. Arriving 100 yards up tide of Lynmouth which was very satisfactory, we anchored, blew up the inflatable (this was, to become a monotonous necessity - it took 15 minutes and we blew it up whenever we anchored, twice most days), went ashore and had a pub lunch and a sleep in the sun - beautiful day.

After the kip we set off for Ilfracombe in the afternoon but stopped at Combe Martin for a drop of liquid and a bite about 5.00 p.m., then motored on keeping very close in shore to Ilfracombe as the tide was against us. The coast along here was very pretty and it was pleasant winding, our way in and out of the bays to beat the tide. That evening we met Minch and crew of "Lady Ann" (local Thornbury villains? Severn pirates) and slept aboard.

### **Day 3 - Ilfracombe to Lundy**

Monday the wind was very much better early in the morning but we did not set off until about 12 noon after a stroll round the town. By his time the wind had died so we had to use the motor again and set out to sea to avoid the chop off Bull Point but the conditions were very uncomfortable. In fact, Steve my crew was lying horizontally along the centre thwart of the boat and as conditions seemed so unpleasant we decided to take the course that appeared to be taken by other small boats and kept closely into the shore. Off Bull Point sea conditions were very bad, the worst that- I would like to experience, particularly because there was no wind. In fact, if the engine had packed up I think we would have had some difficulty in preventing waves from coming over the sides. Amazingly within 5 or 10 minutes a reasonable wind got up and we were able to hoist sail and proceed towards Lundy where we arrived at about 3.30 p.m., anchored and went ashore for a late lunch and a snooze in the sun. Spent the evening drinking in the pub and slept the night in the little cave clown by the beach. It was very pleasant and the sun woke us early

in the morning piercing the entrance to the cave.

#### **Day 4 - Lundy to Port Isaac**

Tuesday the wind was blowing a little too strongly from the north east about 4 to 5 and it would not have been possible for us to get off in our little plastic dinghy. We were very worried about the boat but luckily one of the, local, skin divers came down in their large inflatable and took us out to "Pippin". We were not able to leave Lundy until about 12.30 p.m. and because of the conditions we were very much behind time.

Anyhow, we set course for Bude where it was hoped to spend the evening and despite the chop shown on the chart sea conditions were good. We arrived off Bude about 4 o'clock but it was low tide and quite obvious that we could not get ashore, We had a north east wind going about 4 to 5 driving us at maximum speed of about 5 knots'. We arrived at Port Isaac about 9 o'clock just before H.W. and had considerable difficulty in mooring as the anchor would not hold against small waves breaking in the harbour. We were offered all sorts of advice from the fishermen who were completely unable to appreciate the weight of "Pippin". Eventually it was decided to pull her up the beach on wet pieces of wood. This we did to the complaint that she had not got a very good keel on her and the fact that she weighed so much. However we got her up and had supper of beer and magnificent Cornish pasties.

#### **Day 4 - Port Isaac to Newquay**

It was warm and dry and we had a very pleasant night on the beach at Port Isaac with very little disturbance, apart from a few gulls and were woken about 5.30 a.m. by fishermen seeing to their pots for the day's fishing. One of them had a large clinker dinghy called "Shepherdine" which he had bought from Bristol. He had always wanted to visit, Shepardine and as this is the "Thornbury Evening Sailing Contingent" Drinking Venue I was able to tell him a little about the "Windbound".

We set out at high tide and headed towards Pentire Point across Padstow Bay to Trevoze Head and then down to Newquay. We arrived at Newquay about 1 o'clock for our lunchtime beer, bite and snooze on the beach. We had good wind (about 4), once again from the northeast and it was quite hectic getting into Newquay Harbour. We used our usual mooring procedure in harbour. This consisted of putting out the anchor so that it is at its fullest extent if the boat is alongside the wall. It requires a certain amount of judgment and what with the locals not liking it and my bad judgment it took us about 10 minutes to lay our anchor. Anyhow, we managed it and tied up to some steps to what appeared to be the jetty in the centre of the harbour. Then we climbed a rather high rickety, rusty, iron ladder to the top of the jetty. We thought how very lucky to find a mooring so convenient but when we looked around to find out how to get to the Town Centre we found that the jetty was, in fact, a little island. We got back to the boat at about 4 o'clock after our siesta. "Pippin" was barely floating and by the time we got everything in she was not floating. It was impossible to get off from Newquay so we had to spend the night on the beach but were disturbed the following morning about 6.45 by, a security man and a local vigilante with a huge great Alsatian who were determined that the likes of us should not be allowed to litter the "Private" beaches of Newquay. We were, in fact, sworn at and threatened with the hound. I rang the police and have since written to the Chief Constable of Cornwall but neither seemed particularly disturbed by these men's offensive behaviour or fully understand the peaceful requirements of Dayboaters.

#### **Day 5 - Newquay to St. Ives**

We set off with a Force 4 north east wind that gave a heavy sea just before high tide and headed for St. Ives, stopping on the way at St. Agnes for the usual, and whilst there felt obliged to inform St. Agnes coast

guard we were on route. The coast guard station is about 1.2 miles from the beach and on a hot day it seemed a waste of time walking up there but I suppose we should have allowed for this stop. We arrived at St. Ives about 7 o'clock in the evening and slept the night on the beach beneath the harbour wall. This time we were awoken at 4 o'clock in the morning with the same threatening behaviour by what I assumed was a policeman in uniform. Actually he refused to give me his name and number- after threatening to have us inside if we asked any more questions. You'd be surprised how quickly a threat like that subdues you! However, the next day I ascertained that he was, in fact, employed by St. Ives Council. (Must be something to do with Free Wales or Free Cornwall or something.)

## **Day 6 - Round Lands End**

Still a bit confused (lack of sleep;), we left St, Ives the next morning without informing the coast guard and could not decide whether to visit the Scilly Isles or proceed to Penzance: In fact, later, we decided to go to Penzance or somewhere between St, Ives and Penzance, The wind was blowing about Force 5 north north east with a very unpleasant swell. We both felt sick and determined from the charts to miss the chop off Cape Cornwall. We rounded Lands End with the wind increasing to about Force 6 gusting 7 then planed on the broad reach round to Porthcurno. We were in the lee of the land and there was no swell but it was very gusty. We were very pleased to put into Porthcurno which was completely sheltered and we anchored in crystal clear' water and rowed ashore in our little plastic dinghy. We had a snooze on the beach; it was a magnificently sunny day and in the evening we put the tent up on the beach and then walked to a pub near Treen, the "Logan Rock". On the way we passed the coast guard house and decided to mention our arrival to the coast guard just in case they had seen us leave St. Ives. He seemed very jovial and said he would see us down the pub later. We had a very pleasant meal at the "Logan Rock", chicken-in-the-basket, in very nice snug. Instead of having very low beamed ceilings as in the bar, it had very tall ceilings very much like a chapel. Our friendly coast guard arrived as we were about to start our meal and we spent the evening talking about nautical things and we were very surprised to learn how closely one is observed at sea by the coast guards. He had in fact, only just averted a full-scale search for us when he rang up, much to his surprise and ours. We had been seen to leave St. Ives and not arriving on the Scillies, they were obviously rather concerned. Anyhow he gave them a very good story so as not to get dinghy sailors too poor a reputation and we had a very jovial evening

The next day we set off about 9 o'clock for Newlyn. The wind was reasonable to start with 2-3 north northeast but died away. We decided to take the sails down and fish for mackerel and sunbathe. We caught half a dozen and then motored into Newlyn harbour.

We took a train back to Bristol, picked the trailer up and drove back to pick the boat up and trailed it home.

I should add that the weather conditions were absolutely perfect; the sun shone every day and the nights were very warm. We had intended to sail back to Thornbury but in view of the wind direction we decided against it. We sailed about 200 miles. It was not very strenuous sailing; in fact, I'm afraid it was more like a pub crawl with the advantage of being at sea and the beautiful coastal scenery. It was a fantastic holiday and I would strongly recommend it. However, I think it could be unpleasant if there were headwinds of Force 4-5 and no sun and I believe these conditions are more normal, I'm sure you see more of the coast in a dinghy and a Dayboat seems to me the answer for this sort of jaunt,

David Clifford