

## What happened in 2012 in our cruising year

Looking back at the 2012 cruise itinerary we needed good weather and having waited as boaters for the last few years surely it was time for a change !!

With a break from our normal format we tried to combine Easter weekend and the remainder of the week for those that could stay, with anticipation rising we approached the day of departure our skippers meeting held on the Thursday evening ready to try the new bridge system ? The weather a little unsettled but a window of opportunity to get there was available so although a number dropped out because of the planned weather, we were still able to muster 10 vessels.

Off we popped bound for Port Solent a very sheltered marina right at the end of Portsmouth harbour living on its own with restaurant's and a lock. The journey up was reasonable and as we made our way it to the harbour after our 2 hour run we were greeted by the overzealous harbour volunteer who shouted and pointed at some of the boats to move over, ask our treasurer we gave as good as we got !we were all in the small boat channel honest. Winding our way up the harbour bearing right past the Tipnor ranges we approached the lock of Port Solent mooring temporarily on the waiting pontoon before entering and making the short ascent up to marina level. Having dropped in numbers we were all accommodated together which is after all what a rally is all about, time to explore here and take the taxi to Gunwarf quays if that is your bag so to speak, the bus does go but takes nearly an hour as it goes around Portsdown Estate before returning to the City centre. Due to the reduced numbers we were able to get in a restaurant for a meal which is always a nice way to mingle and discuss that boating problem or next event. With the weather closing in for the week we decided to move a day early to Ocean village that way our costs were cut and if all else failed we could leave boats in our home marina chain. The move achieved safely and lock negotiated many thinking that the bridges were not that bad after all and not having to get an exit number to leave, are our bridges so much of a hindrance? If only we could get the three bridge sequence that was promised at the inquiry and better times, we may once again enjoy that boating experience from Cobbs Quay. With a few boats staying the week and a plan to move to Hythe Marina before returning home rather than Port Hamble visits to the IOW were carried out by fast ferry for some and the IOW explored. Yet again the rain failed to dampen many of the spirits before our return home the following weekend, a fun and at sometimes wet week in the Solent but enjoyable none the less.

With Easter being early and many a time the weather is unsettled, getting the first cruise completed left us in high hopes for the season ahead! However never count on the weather, again our trip to Cherbourg fell foul of high winds and rough seas, I am beginning to wonder if Robin from Reflections is cursed as they have now I think tried to cross the Channel on four previous attempts with the berth holders association and our safety boat Girl fisher, It will happen fingers crossed for next year!!!

The weather leading up to our West country cruise was very unsettled and many renamed it the the Wandering West Wet Cruise !! Having very few opportunities to use our boats so far for even local things the pressure was on to get away, the weather ebbed and flowed good then bad. The briefing was held and the conditions discussed although a very marginal call and gambling on a return day to materialise we decided to go for it. Now in hind sight this was a tough call and when we factor in a

bigger swell than expected it was less not comfortable, made worse by boats that had problems on the way, me included (Steering issues on both boats) and engine problems that followed for the other boat as well. The conditions started to worsen and a call was made to get the Lifeboat to attend as no steering and one engine meant that the boat tossed and turned like a cork facing every way going and coming. Once there the lifeboat escorted the boat in to Torbay the rest of the fleet going on to Dartmouth, I have never tried to steer my boat on engines alone and it was exceptionally hard in the seas we were encountering, my problem was an electrical short circuit on the power pilot which I never use, fortunately holding me straight, with the main breaker in the engine bay, a great place for it in a rough sea!! this made it impossible to isolate until under the lee of the land at Dartmouth, fortunately it was isolated, pulling the wires out helped!!

On the Dart here at last all of us bar the boat in Torbay we were together on the Deep water moorings to the West near to the towns pontoon although not connected to land. The grey ness and



rain continued, birthday party, boat sold (not because of the crossing) we had it all! An arranged a trip to Totnes taking part in ferry wars for a pound return!! The local family run company who have been on the river for over sixty years were fighting a national run company trying to take over there routes so to support the locals I think everyone went on the trip, dinner in some great pubs before returning to base, not a bad weather day and enjoyable past the sights of the Dart. The

following day was the Queens Jubilee and to celebrate the Dart had put on a boat procession down the river, where we enjoyed the sights and the flags together with the population watching from the river banks. We left later that afternoon mindful that the weather was closing in on the later part of the week our plan looked in tatters .Brixham beckoned on a flat sea so we all refuelled there ready for a run home if necessary but not before going to Torquay where we hold up waiting for the wind to drop and the weather to behave. To pass the time one of our boats formed a PAA invitational golf event to take place at the local Torquay pitch and putt with a rules and events committee formed the inaugural field of 8 competitors took to the course. The sun shone but the wind blew, golf was the winner of course the field was strong but came down to a couple of shots that determined the places. Well done everyone who took part we hope that this can continue in some format on our summer cruises if possible, after all there was plenty to talk about and ponder for future events. We arranged a meal at the Torquay Royal yacht club which rounded off our cruise nicely a lovely place to spend an evening if you go to Torquay please make the time to walk up the hill, the panoramic window view is worth the walk as is the club on an evening, as CQBHA members you are affiliated to the RYA so entry is always possible.



In nineteen years of running the cruises I have never had to worry about our return to home, but from an early point it was going to prove to be a gamble, we all knew that before we left the weather and the wind was not playing ball it was just not going to come through in time if ever!!. In fact for the first time in my boating life we decided to leave our own boat to stay in a hotel with a 30 ft boat jumping up and down in the marina at least three foot it was not going to be a night to remember. Some of the towns pontoons on the other side were going up and down at least a metre

in the swell and for those that know Torquay well the Princess sales berths with flybridge boats on stern out to the entrance had a swell breaking over the bathing platforms, a sight I will never forget or want to see again in a hurry. The following morning we returned to find one of our fenders had burst our centre cleat barely connected and loose, proof that it was a good decision to leave her overnight.

Our thoughts turned to leaving the following day we as a group decided to try our luck, but I made it about a mile before returning a sea not for me or indeed anyone else as we all turned back. We then made the decision I have never made before to leave the boats here and return by car to get our own transport before returning, thank you to the two cars that transported us back for those that could not stay till Monday. For the record Monday was a good crossing for those that could stay, a fitting end to a long wet trip west, I am pleased that the boats that stayed all came back in company nobody came back on their own as we managed to pair boats up, after all it is the same distance across Lyme bay as crossing the channel and a rally is cruising in company.

With the Olympics centre stage and taking Weymouth away for the final rally of the normal season our last event remaining was to the Channel islands, the weather was still not playing ball, then it changed as suddenly as it had all year, we left across the Channel in foggy/ misty conditions, visibility about 2 -3 miles ample for us and flatter seas because of the conditions so off to Jersey we went. We forged ahead a good trip for the planning craft, but our support boat escorted one of the semi displacement craft back to Poole leaving her the conundrum of pushing hard to make the tide and sill or having to wait outside for the night. She pushed hard and we welcomed her on arrival after we ourselves had popped out of the fog into perfect clear blue skies and warm sunshine after miles of grey seamless mist as we approached Jersey. Once in and settled after sunning ourselves on the holding pontoon we had a couple of days to chill the crews explored the delights of Jersey before we made our way back to Guernsey to refuel before returning to Poole a good trip considering the season we had, controlled as ever by the wind and seas, but as boaters we wait and live for the dream of a season to remember maybe next year will be it!!

For all those that attended our 2012 season thank you for your continued support please tell others about your experiences both good and bad the only way we can get better is for more people to give it a go rather than rely on the here say go on try it for yourself you might be surprised! Not too many at one time though, all of our visiting marinas limit spaces to us, we operate a first come first served basis on all of our events that way everyone gets the same opportunity once the booking form go live on our web site!!)