

EAST COWES



SAILING CLUB



Meridian Cruise in Company

May 2017

Souvenir Log

Saturday 20th May 2017 — strong winds and poor conditions delayed the start by 24 hours.

Sunday 21st May 2017 — East Cowes to Chichester Bar — 15 Nautical Miles

Mike Harvey in Kaikoura, a Jeanneau Merry Fisher 625, started from the club in the late morning to position himself for an afternoon's fishing near the Horse Sand Fort submarine barrier. By mid-afternoon, the east wind had turned the sea to an uncomfortable chop. Fishing over for the day, Mike headed for Sparkes Marina which is tucked inside Chichester Harbour next to the Hayling Island Sailing Club.

Lorraine and Dave Nixon in the 30' Seadog Ketch Gina, having taken position on the club hammerhead on the previous day, left before noon during a convenient break in Gina's ongoing maintenance. The wind was on the nose so Gina was happy motor-sailing through the chop with just the mizzen set. Around tea-time, Gina attempted entry to Sparkes Marina. Hordes of intense children in Optimists and other small craft buzzed around in the channel to the marina. It was like driving a combine-harvester through a kindergarten. The promised spot alongside the marina wall was already filled so Gina retreated and made her way to the Thornlea channel to drop the hook.

Vaneeta and Bob in CScape, a 30' Westerly Longbow Ketch, had left their berth in Island Harbour mid-morning and taken Gina's recently vacated spot on the Harbour Authority pontoon near the club. CScape left the Harbour Authority pontoon around noon and made her way into the strengthening easterly wind towards the submarine barrier shore-side of Horse Sand Fort. Later, the crew struck the sails in the increasing chop and made their way towards Sparkes Marina to join Kaikoura and Mike Harvey.

Mike Tennuci in Tideline, a 28' Colvic Countess, also left around noon. Mike, a true sailor, kept the faith and tacked all the way. Mike was last over Chichester Bar but spent the least in fuel.

Tideline checked with the other boats about their plans for the evening. Gina opted for Sparkes Marina after all, and Mike Tennuci decided to anchor in the Thornlea Channel. Mike, however, ate better than anyone. He rustled up a pork joint with roast potatoes and vegetables washed down with Gallic liquor; the spoils from Tideline's recent cross-channel cruise.

The restaurant at Sparkes Marina had closed some 8 months previously, so the remaining three boats had no choice but to eat on board.

Mike Harvey arranged with the Hayling Island Sailing Club for us to visit their bar. The club bar closed early on a Sunday, but provided we arrived by 1900, we could enjoy a few drinks while the staff cleaned the pipes and closed-up. The view of the sunset from the elevated terrace overlooking the harbour entrance was magnificent.



1. Hayling Island Sailing Club Terrace

Monday 22nd May 2017 — layover day in Sparkes Marina

Mike Tennuci enjoyed a fair wind for his return home but not before he had advised Gina on a negotiating strategy (and it

worked) for the purchase of a starter battery from Sparkes' on-site chandlery.

No one relished bashing into the wind on a passage around Selsey Bill. Hayling Island was a peaceful and attractive alternative for the day.

Kaikoura set off early for a few hours fishing along Selsey Bill. Mike Harvey managed to hook a smooth-hound.

Vaneeta and Bob took a bus and spent an enjoyable few hours in Havant.

Meanwhile, Gina whiled away the time with essential maintenance.



2. SeaScope in Sparkes Marina

That evening, the company walked along the shore-side road to the Lifeboat pub. This traditional venue was hosting a local ukulele club for the evening; an enjoyable conclusion to a pleasant day.

Tuesday 23rd May 2017 — Chichester Bar to Brighton Marina — 35 Nautical Miles

The wind had shifted more to the west.

Kaikoura, started home at 0900 to make the most of the wind and tide combination for a smoother passage.

Mindful of the timing of the route eastward through the Looe Channel, the remaining duo, CScape and Gina, met-up at the West Pole off Chichester Bar and set out for the Boulder Buoy and the entrance to the Looe Channel.

Both ketches adopted the jib and jigger sail-plan often used by ketches on-passage in uncertain conditions.

The boats made good time through the Looe Channel. They had not long passed the East Borough Head Cardinal when CScape advised Gina of the fog rolling in from the south.

The fog bank engulfed CScape and Gina in a matter of minutes.

Both boats kept in close contact. Gina having dropped behind was reporting her position and bearing to CScape. Gina went haring-off after the wrong ketch disappearing into the murk in the direction of Littlehampton. CScape was moved to politely enquire why Gina was heading in the wrong direction?

Gina had the benefit of AIS and RADAR. Combined with the chart plotter, these aids take much of the uncertainty out of poor visibility on passage. Mind you, there are both marked and unmarked lobster grounds on the course from the Looe Channel to Brighton Marina, so deploying the auto-helm, which is a little unwieldy, is not a good idea. Instead, the crew took turns at the plotter; conning the helm out in the cockpit; one at the wheel and the other singing out instructions.

CScape was reassured by making contact with a support boat on station off the Rampion Wind Farm. The support boat confirmed CScape was well north of the wind farm and there were no radar contacts on her proposed course to Brighton.

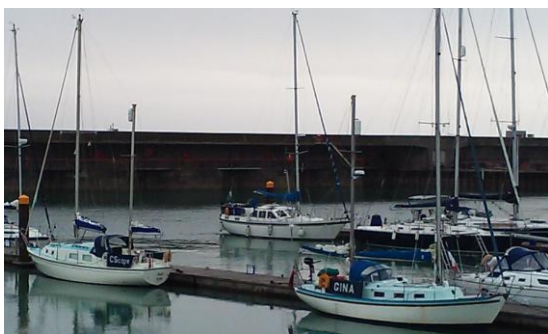
Pretty soon, the sea took a moderate turn and the current ran faster. Gina touched 8 knots over the ground.

CScape and Gina discussed the alternatives to Brighton, being Shoreham to the west and Newhaven to the east. They agreed to make an attempt at entry to Brighton Marina and fall back to Newhaven if needed.

Both boats, out of sight of each other, approached Brighton Marina with some trepidation. Even in good visibility, from the west, the entrance can be difficult to make out. In a moderate sea combined with poor visibility the decision to enter can be marginal.

It was CScape's first time into Brighton. Outrageously, marina staff advised the crew to fit their ropes and fenders outside the harbour.

CScape and Gina berthed in the marina at 1900. Two decisions quickly followed: we'd stay for two nights and we'd meet in the Wetherspoons overlooking the marina as soon as possible.



3. CScape and Gina in Brighton

Wednesday 24th May 2017 — layover day in Brighton Marina — diamonds and balls

The new day dawned bright and sunny. The crew of CScape spent the day in the sprawling marina complex. The crew of Gina, remembering the cruise objective, resolved to catch a bus to Peacehaven and take pictures of the prime meridian monument. They quickly found out that buses don't run from Brighton Marina to Peacehaven during the week.

Brighton is trying hard to combat its growing reputation as a part-tide marina. Entry and exit have been restricted for boats drawing more than a metre, to two hours either side of low water, for years. Currently (May 2017) two dredgers are being deployed. A dredger and barge pair in the main entrance channel

and a smaller dredger in the marina itself. The ECSC yacht Bloto, during her ongoing UK circumnavigation, reported depth problems with the visitor's pontoons.



4. Doris the Dredger

The afternoon saw Border Force question the crew of CScape. There your correspondent was, thinking that the last trouble we had with Colonials' on English shores was John Paul Jones' raid on Whitehaven in 1778. Border Force obviously has more up-to-date intelligence.

The crews of Gina and CScape spent a sunny early evening in the Brighton Marina Yacht Club bar. Bob was tipped-the-wink by the barmaid that the forfeit for wearing a hat in the bar was a round of drinks for all present.



5. Outside the Brighton Marina Yacht Club

Thursday 25th May 2017 — Brighton Marina to Royal Clarence Marina Gosport — 40 Nautical Miles

The boats left the marina at 0930 into bright sunshine and a soldier's wind. All sails were

drawing and iron topsails deployed. We had a fantastic passage through the Looe Channel. Gina reached 9.3 knots over the ground.



6. CScape Leaving Brighton

CScape led Gina through the submarine barrier and into Gosport and the Royal Clarence Marina.

The marina opened a new facilities block recently. The new block is superbly appointed. I don't think I've seen better.



7. Royal Clarence Conversion

A couple of eateries have opened on the marina-side in the last 12 months. The larger of which, we sampled on our second day. The food was top class and the prices reasonable.

Friday 26th May 2017 — layover day in Royal Clarence Marina

A sunny day; the hottest of the 2017 so far. The remaining crews took an early dinner in the recently opened *Victualler*.



8. An Early Dinner

Saturday 27th May 2017 — return to East — Cowes Sailing Club — 15 nautical miles

Overnight, the weather broke. There were thunderstorms and torrential rain. Strong winds were forecast for our departure time in the morning. We toyed with the idea of staying an extra day. In the end, we chose the day's wind over the following day's forecast thunderstorms.

After a brisk journey across the Solent, Gina and CScape returned to their respective home berths.

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