

Exmouth to Emsworth (and back)

I blame it all on Pete Munday really. When I saw the flyer in *Trident News* for the Chichester rally it was just one of those things that kept lurking in my head until I finally decided to see if *Kestrel* and I could manage the trip.

Preparations

There were several things that I really needed to sort first which had not been important during *Kestrel's* typical day-sails - most importantly finding someone with Trident experience (Trident-tested you might say!) and with sufficiently manic zest for adventure (and ability to cope with my idiosyncrasies !) to accompany me.

Well, who better to ask than our Vice President Chris Tabor, who had successfully managed to survive my company when he joined me for the Weymouth Rally in 2014 . On exploring his usually full diary, luckily Chris could just squeeze me in between his various international motorcycle tours, and surprisingly sounded quite keen! Perhaps it was because *Kestrel* now has a tiller-pilot making things slightly more relaxed when under way? Anyway, happily this was the first tick-box completed!

The next issue was my old twin burner gimballed gas-stove which had packed up through corrosion, so I bought for £10 on eBay a stainless steel twin burner stove running on pressurised methylated spirit. It was American, made in 1970, and still in really good condition. I mounted it on an aluminium gimballed base and was quite proud of my efforts but unsure of how user friendly it would be to use, so also put onboard a single burner gas cartridge camping stove just in case.

Another thing that had been less than enjoyable in the past was trying to refill *Kestrel's* Yanmar

Kestrel's trip from South Devon to Chichester for the TOA 50th Anniversary Rally

Nigel Dyson's log wins this year's Marcon Trophy Competition

YSE8 fuel tank while underway. It is only a small tank immediately above the engine and filling underway from a large fuel container, especially when heeling, often results in spills giving the cabin that deliciously prolonged aroma of diesel. I also

remembered running the tank dry on our return from the Weymouth Rally and didn't want Chris to suffer again that uncomfortable experience of hearing the engine hiccup and die !

I did think about creating a fully pumped fuel system with a larger tank, but was a bit concerned that the Chichester trip would be its first major test and if anything failed I wouldn't then have the gravity fed tank in immediate reserve. So I bought -very cheaply on eBay- a portable plastic 22 litre Nuova Rade 22 litre fuel tank (without at the time knowing where best onboard to put it), plus a low pressure 12Volt fuel pump, a length of braided 8mm polythene fuel pipe and a small motor-cycle type on/off fuel tap.

Very luckily I just managed (using the slight flexibility of the plastic tank) to squeeze it into a cockpit locker and made a level platform for it to sit on. I then rigged up a pumping system which now enables me very easily to pump some fuel from the 22 litre tank every few hours into the Yanmar tank. Perhaps a bit Heath-Robinson, but it is simple and actually works very reliably. Next tick-box completed !

Next to sort was my very limited supply of navigation charts which did not extend past Portland Bill eastwards. After a bit of deliberation. I bought a cheap iPad chart-plotter, preloaded with all UK marine charts, from London Chart Plotters, for just £120. To date this has been a really good buy and is easy to keep charged up using the 12 volt auxiliary socket onboard.



Chris Tabor at the helm after rounding Portland Bill – thank goodness for better visibility

The only other thing that really concerned me was the corroded state of my anchor chain, so I bought 30 metres of new galvanised chain (isn't eBay handy!), marked it up in 5 metre lengths, and fitted it - Final tick box sorted!! (I also cut a small triangular piece of thick teak to place under the anchor chain when stowed to reduce the likelihood of it lying for a very long time in sea water, which it did in the past.)

So, after getting some provisions on board, *Kestrel* was, I hoped, now ready to go, and the plan was to join Pete Munday and other Tridenteers in Chichester Harbour on Friday evening 22 June for a barbecue.

The main thing to stop the trip was now the weather, but the 2018 summer was so far providing loads of sunshine – just not much wind.

The Trip

Chris arrived on schedule (despite having to navigate some serious road closures) on the afternoon of Tuesday 19 June, and we managed to shoehorn his heavy BMW bike into the small

remaining space in my garage. After a meal (thank you Lynn for the catering) we drove to Starcross and inflated the dinghy. Soon we were safely aboard *Kestrel* with Zodiac deflated again and lashed on the coach-roof, and after a few minutes re-familiarising Chris with *Kestrel*, we set off from my River Exe mooring at 20.30 that evening, pushing out of the estuary against a flood tide. Chris at this time generously donated some Solent Charts - another welcome insurance policy in case of any reliability problems with the chart plotter.

To keep to our schedule, we needed to make Portland Bill by about 10.00 the next day, to use the available 2 hour tide window to take the inshore route around Portland Bill.

Starcross to Lyme Regis (23 nm)

I had initially intended just to sail overnight straight to Portland but Chris came up with the better idea of heading for Lyme Regis and getting a few hours sleep on a visitor mooring there. The sea was calm and wind low so taking a mooring outside the drying harbour would not be a problem. We had a very pleasant motor sailing passage to Lyme Regis with a helping



The Needles ahead – entering the Western Solent

light breeze, clear skies and what became a lovely starry moonlit night. We passed the twinkling lights of Sidmouth, Seaton and Beer en route. I practised using the meths stove and got through rather too many matches trying to light it successfully. Perhaps I just hadn't yet developed the knack. Chris looked on with slight concern but did eventually get his coffee !

Unfortunately, as we approached Lyme Regis at 0200 Wednesday, the moon finally disappeared behind the Devon Hills and the lights around Lyme Regis harbour were switched off leaving us in almost pitch blackness! We did look for the visitor mooring with my flash light but not helped by its pencil beam we could not find the mooring quickly, and were both ready for some sleep, so we tied up to a more readily visible commercial mooring as we were only going to be there for 4 hours -- and gratefully climbed into our sleeping bags.

Lyme Regis to Weymouth (31nm)

The plan for Wednesday was just to get to Weymouth, perhaps enjoying a meal of fresh mackerel, and to have a restful day, catching up on a bit more sleep before heading east again on

Thursday. We set off at about 0630 from the Lyme Regis mooring, with a south easterly breeze helping us, but needing to motor sail to ensure we hit our tide window. During the morning we became more and more pleased to have the chart-plotter because visibility approaching Portland was down to about 300 metres in murky sea mist - so our first sighting of Portland Bill was just managing to make out the darker rock seams of the western cliffs of the Bill a few hundred metres ahead of us, and not being able to see or hear the lighthouse ! But happily – courtesy of the chart-plotter -- we did know exactly where we were ! We rounded the Bill just about on our 10.00 schedule via the inshore passage and were pleasantly surprised to come almost immediately into much clearer sunny weather and then a nice breeze to take us to Weymouth . Sadly however ,having towed the mackerel spinner for hours we hadn't caught any.

At 1130 we tied up and waited (a chance for a well-earned pint) for the 12 noon Bridge Lift to enable us enter Weymouth Marina, and despite me not hearing the radio reply correctly (ears of

a certain age!) for our allocated berth – we were fairly soon tied up and able to enjoy a shower and a lazy afternoon (occasional snoring was evident!) followed by an evening meal in the Kings Arms.

Weymouth to Yarmouth (41nm)

We took the 10am Bridge Lift and headed towards the Isle of Wight. The problem was, by what route? We tried repeatedly to get some clarity on whether, and at what time, Lulworth Range was expected to be firing, but along with other boats who tried – we couldn't get anything at all useful from anyone -so weren't sure whether we needed to keep clear to the south of the range. We decided to follow the other boats taking an inshore route, and to our relief were not intercepted by any of the Range protection boats. We were initially able to sail well with a north westerly breeze but this faded as we sailed further east so on went the motor again as we made our way in continuous sunshine past the lovely Dorset coastal scenery, traversed the disturbed water off St Albans Head., and headed eastwards with the tide, helped (but slightly headed) by light north easterlies, still motor-sailing, towards the Needles.

We did have some minor uncertainties interpreting the Solent channel buoyage as we approached from the west, but soon sorted that out and comforted by large ships taking the same course as ourselves into the Solent, we pushed on towards Yarmouth with the last of the tide, arriving at Yarmouth Marina at 1730, and were helpfully escorted into the marina by one of the many harbour dories. Time now for a shower followed by the very generous helpings of pub food at the Kings Head -and of course some liquid to wash it down.

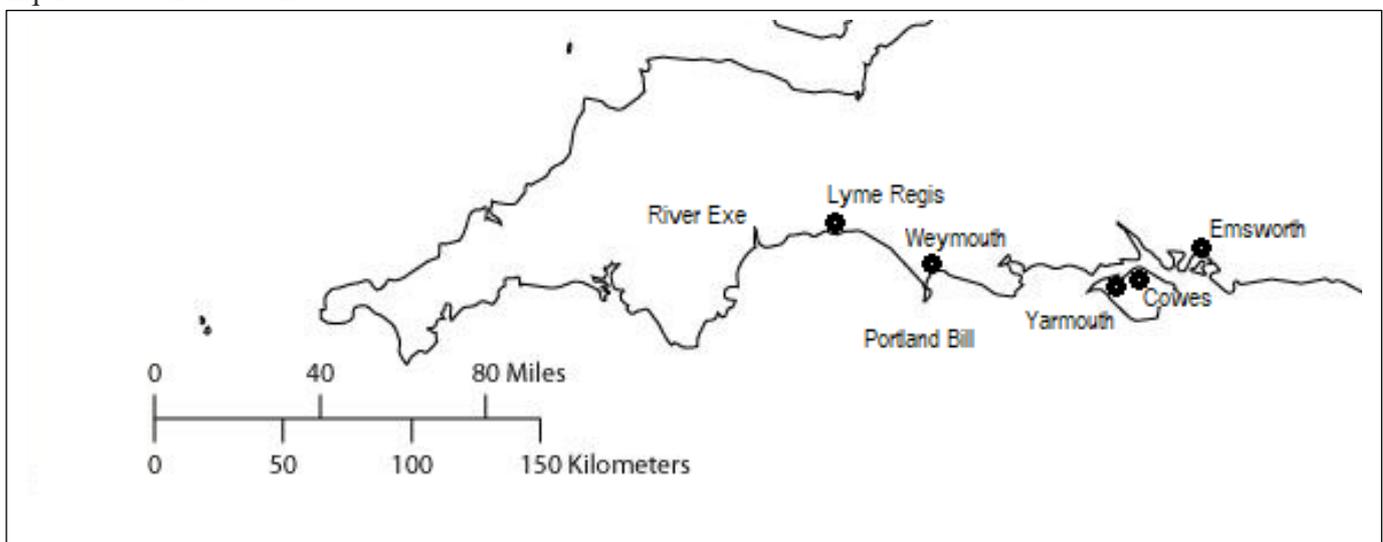
Yarmouth to Chichester Harbour (24nm)

A shorter passage today, again in hot sunshine, but the Solent was like a millpond with no wind whatsoever, so the YSE8 was at work again! As we left Yarmouth, into the last of the adverse tide at around 1100, a massive gin-palace anchored off the harbour, and sounded on the radio to be arranging for a singer to go on board for the evening.

We decided we didn't need one on Kestrel, but did fancy a coffee. This was when I learnt that I had to be more careful with my spirit stove. I had accidentally left the unlit burner slightly open, which resulted in a small flood of burning meths developing beneath the stove – not recommended! – but at least it very quickly went out, with nothing damaged apart from my pride and Chris's loss of any remaining confidence in the stove. After this, the spare gas stove was definitely favoured.

We were almost off Portsmouth by the time we picked up some good wind, then were able to cover the last few miles to Chichester Bar under sail, enjoying making well over 6 knots. Today we did at least take 3 mackerel on the spinner. We entered the harbour at around 1630 and soon met up with *Trifler*, *Red Kite* and *Juno*.

Under Pete's competent command, after saying our initial hellos, we rafted-up three abreast on *Red Kite's* anchor to meet and greet. Then we all anchored in the Itchenor Channel to be ferried ashore in Pete's dinghy for a lovely barbecue as the sun went down. Thank you Pete for the food, Robert for the beer, Chris for the gourmet mackerel fillets, and everyone for your excellent company. A lovely relaxing evening shared by fellow Tridenteers. What better ?? A well



skipped voyage in Pete's dinghy back to our boats ended a lovely day.

Itchenor to Emsworth Marina (3.5 nm)

The shortest leg by far today. Just a few miles of morning motoring up the pretty Emsworth Channel to the Yacht Harbour in flat calm, sunshine and no wind. One noted feature of this leg was Chris rapidly jumping ship to *Juno* to help Geoff raise his anchor. Another was seeing the different speeds that the variously engined Tridents were making up the channel. Bob Doe's meet and greet tactics, while easily overtaking last night's barbecue squad, were clearly aided by many more horsepower than my YSE8 produces. I also remember making some minor attempts to get *Kestrel* looking a bit tidier before arrival at the Rally.

Once tied up all the Tridents fitted very snugly and prettily on the Emsworth visitor pontoon. After a shower and several hellos, I made a quick provisioning trip into Emsworth before our lovely lunch – a trip which became slightly extended when, complete with full shopping bag, I chased about two hundred yards to intercept an elderly lady who had accidentally left her bank card at the Co-op check-out. She was really grateful.

We had a lovely meal at the Deck restaurant and the Trident-natter continued unabated through the afternoon and evening. Early evening was enriched with very welcome tots of rum for us all, courtesy of Sue and Howard, and following the 1800 hrs traditions of the Royal Naval Tot Club of Antigua and Barbuda (of which Sue is a member) and our communal recital of its adopted rather wonderful regular evening toast, which I think well reflected our views too.

*There are good ships and wood ships
All ships that set to sea
But the best ships are friendships
And may that always be*

Shortly after this my son Nick and his two young children Charlie and Harriet arrived aboard *Kestrel* and dined on fish and chips. They had kindly driven from their home in Burgess Hill to see me. Following their departure further night-caps were taken by several of us at the Deck – the end of a splendid day which was a fitting tribute to Pete Munday's hard work in organising the Rally.

Emsworth to Yarmouth (31 nm)



Sunset at Emsworth Yacht Harbour

The time had come for the rally to disperse, and for *Kestrel* to retrace her steps (or is it wake?) , so after topping up with diesel and bidding our farewells we set off down the Emsworth channel at around 0930 once there was sufficient water over the Marina cill. Again it was an absolutely windless morning with totally flat water, so we were under motor right down Emsworth Channel, and in the Solent. We were past Cowes by about 12.30, making the most of the fair tide when Chris had a call from Howard on his mobile to say that *Swallow* really did not want to go home yet after the Rally so she had stopped her engine and flatly refused to have it restarted despite Howard and Sue's efforts to change her mind

Our target had been to return to Yarmouth with fair tide as far as we could, although we knew we would have tide turning against us just before Yarmouth. But now, excitingly, *Kestrel* had been asked to become a Trident rescue tug and tow *Swallow* into Cowes -so we did an about-turn for a couple of miles, located *Swallow* and rafted up to her under Chris's expert guidance, with me wondering how well the YSE8 would move two Tridents. No problem. We chugged into Cowes like an overweight catamaran , while I helped Howard try to clear what was obviously a blockage in *Swallow*'s fuel line, and like all



Chris Tabor catches up on some sleep

blockages tend to be , in the most inaccessible place possible. No luck!

So we put *Swallow* onto a pontoon berth (much to the concern of the long-term resident seagulls nesting in the adjacent boat on the pontoon) , because we didn't have enough water under us to get her back up the Medina as far as her mooring. We then had another unsuccessful go with our improvised rodding devices, before setting off down river to continue our passage in what was by then a carnival atmosphere on the Medina because England had just beaten Panama 6-1 in the World Cup.

Once out in the Solent again we had the tide against us and the wind on our nose, and made slow progress towards Yarmouth, in sight of *Trifler* for some of the way until she anchored off Newtown River with adverse wind and tide. We tried to stay close inshore to avoid the worst of the tide, and not helped by my echo sounder which has never been trustworthy in very limited depth, we twice thoroughly polished the barnacles off the bottom of Kestrel's keel , and

immediate course corrections were made while heeling her over to free the keel!

Toward Yarmouth the wind did veer enough for us to get the sails up , which helped us make it to the marina by 1800. We berthed next to a very executive gin palace -which we both decided was just not a proper boat like a Trident. After showering we filled our faces with another very good meal and a couple of pints in the Kings Head.

Yarmouth to Weymouth (43 nm)

Monday was another hot flat calm day, so we were well used to the noise of the motor as we headed west again, leaving Yarmouth around 0930. I was quite amazed at the massive number of jellyfish as we crossed towards Swanage- definitely not an incentive to take a dip!

After one of Chris's excellent breakfasts while we crossed the Solent approaches, we decided again to take the inshore route past Lulworth range, and hope for the best.

After some very relaxing motor-sailing (once a little wind had come up) we were intercepted by a Range Patrol boat, whose skipper (in good

humour) agreed with us that the level of information available when firing was taking place was very poor – and did also kindly let us know that we had a mackerel trailing on our spinner before asking us politely to steer a slightly more offshore route. Unfortunately the mackerel fell off the hook as we wound it in. Just our luck !!

We made it into Weymouth for the 1600 bridge lift, after eagle-eyed Chris spotted Jim Long out in *Adelaide* as we approached. Never one to miss an opportunity, Chris then arranged to meet up with Jim and his wife Lyn for a meal that evening.

So a little later we all had an enjoyable walk along the seafront to see the famous sand sculptor's work, and then headed to a restaurant for the biggest plateful of cod and chips that I've ever encountered, and a very drinkable bottle of local "Piddle" ale, while having a very enjoyable natter. Afterwards we headed back to *Kestrel* in the marina, making a quick provisioning dash to the nearby supermarket just before its 2200 closing, and a settling down for a full-bellied night's sleep.

Weymouth to Starcross (45nm)

We left using the 08.00 bridge lift, once again initially in the absence of any wind, to head round Portland Bill with the tide. No problems with foggy conditions this time and a light south easterly brewed up as we rounded the Bill so we could actually give the sails some more exercise with the wind almost directly astern.

This time, rather than taking a route via Lyme Regis, we headed straight across Lyme Bay for Exmouth in lovely sunny conditions yet again. The tiller pilot just occasionally struggled to hold course under motor, on a run, as the wind strength and direction shifted a bit, but otherwise we had a very relaxing and easy last motor-sailing leg of our trip, with Chris once again demonstrating his great ability to rustle up a lovely fry-up.

The wind slowly faded away as we approached Exmouth, but we arrived back on *Kestrel's* Starcross mooring at about 1630 and within an hour we had rescued Chris's bike from my garage so that, true to form, he could, after a quick cuppa, quickly get on his way homeward via his next meal appointment.

And that was it – A lovely week's Trident adventure had come to an end !

Footnote

Massive thanks to Chris for volunteering to join me on this expedition, and for putting up with me for a week. Lynn says he deserves a medal. Also huge thanks to Pete Munday for arranging and hosting such a splendid Rally.

My sincere thanks also to Howard and Sue for the arrival, very shortly after my return home, of a lovely bottle of Antiguan Rum as a very generous thank you for their tow. Having been around English Harbour in Antigua a few years ago and having so enjoyed our communal tot and Sue's evening recital during the Rally, this made a wonderful end to a really enjoyable week's trip.

Nigel Dyson



Last day en route for the River Exe. Chris is actually reading *Trident News*