



The Crabber Chronicles

Highlights from the 2019 Pick-and-Mix Solent Rally



The Rally

2019 saw the seventh annual gathering of boats for the Cornish Crabbers Club Solent Rally, which is organized by Julian Biggs and open to all Crabbers and Shrimpers. The rally has always been held in June, a time of year that normally offers the best chance of favourable weather and indeed June 2018 delivered warm sunshine and light winds. However, this year was marked by an unusual bend in the jet stream which brought extremely unsettled conditions and unreliable weather forecasting.

It is a great credit to Julian's flexible approach to the schedule, which enabled participants to "pick and mix" the various passages and venues throughout the week as dictated by the weather and other commitments.

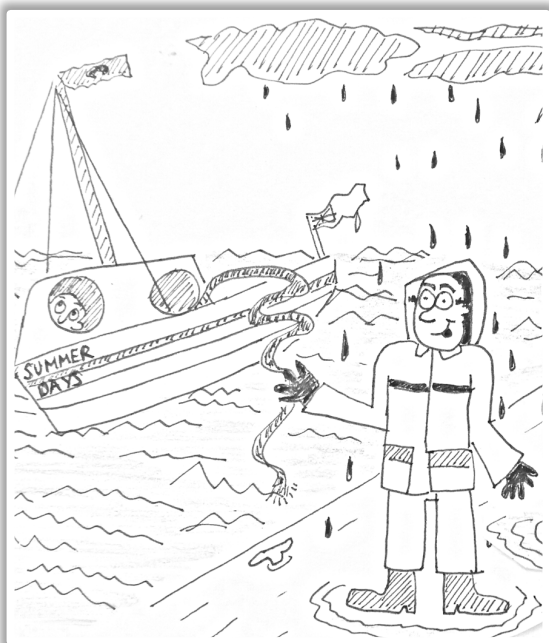
Planning

An enormous amount of work went into planning the rally, including marina bookings, dinner arrangements, invoicing, risk assessment, passage selections to make best use of the tides and so on.

This year the entry list totalled 25 boats, covering almost the full range of Cornish Crabber craft from the Shrimper 19, through Shrimper 21's, Crabber 22's, Crabber 24's old and new, Cornish Yawl, Crabber 26's to the wonderful Pilot Cutter.

Not all boats attended every part of the rally, but that's partly what makes the event attractive to participants with busy lives.



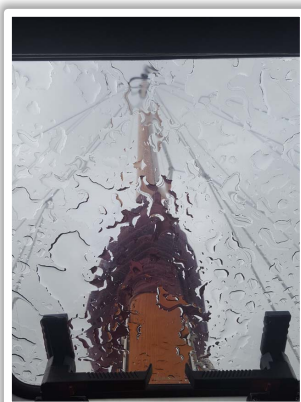


Pre Rally

Mon 10th to Thu 13th

Six boats decided on a trip to Poole before the start of the organised rally. The initial loose plan was to rendezvous in Lymington on Tuesday 11th June before crossing Christchurch Bay on Wednesday and returning to Yarmouth on Friday. Sadly, with the unsettled weather and the ever-changing forecasts, this plan was dropped.

However, Moores Claws and Maudie IV set off from Chichester at silly o'clock on Monday 10th for one night at Shepards Marina and then on Tuesday sailed to the Dan Bran pontoon in Lymington. On Wednesday the 12th they did a short hop over to Yarmouth where they met up with Sally Lightfoot who had a gentle sail down from the Hamble. Thursday started wet and windy. Although the rain stopped in the morning the wind continued to build during the day. Nevertheless, the crews had a good time exploring new and old haunts in Yarmouth.



Moores Claws – it's warm and dry inside!

Yarmouth – start of the Rally

Fri 14th / Sat 15th

Some of the worst wind conditions were experienced at the beginning of the rally in Yarmouth. Despite the conditions the three boats of the advance party met up with three more boats, Yo Yo, Buster and West Wind. A fairly blustery day greeted the crews on Friday, but as it was accompanied by long sunny periods walks across downs and to Freshwater were the order of the day. That evening the crews enjoyed the hospitality of the Yarmouth Sailing Club before an evening meal at the Blue Crab. On Saturday a boatless Julian joined Moores Claws as cabin boy for the start of the rally and six more determined rally goers made use of the IoW ferry to enjoy the excellent fare at the Royal Solent Yacht Club opening dinner on Saturday.

Congratulations to all the Shrimpers and Crabbers who made it to the start of the rally in less than ideal weather.

Only West Wind set off to Bucklers Hard on Sunday, the rest of the fleet deciding on another night in Yarmouth before making their way on Monday to Island Harbour. Buster and Sally Lightfoot moored up in Newport for lunch, whilst most of the other boats tied up on the Folly river pontoons to await lock clearance and berthing in Island Harbour.





West Wind

Beaulieu

Sun 16th

With continuing unsettled weather and another miserable forecast, formal arrangements for the Bar-B-Q at Beaulieu were cancelled in favour of a prolonged stay in Yarmouth.

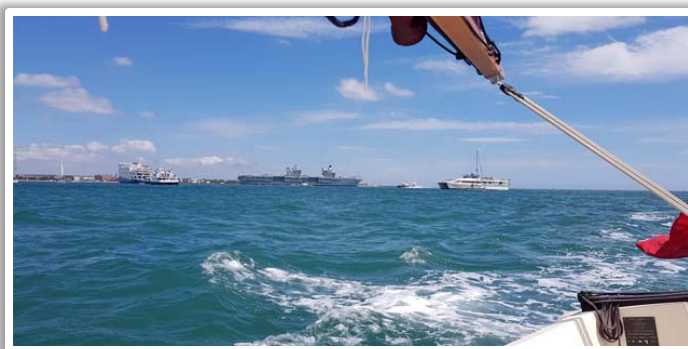
Unphased by the forecast, the crews of West Wind and Creekability 2 went ahead with their own Bar-B-Q on the green.

Island Harbour – day 1

Mon 17th

The Rally really started to come together at Island Harbour, with 18 boats congregating in this lovely setting.

It was good to catch up with everyone's news at a well-earned slap up meal that evening in the Breeze Restaurant.



Departure of HMS Queen Elizabeth from Portsmouth as seen by Amigo en route to Island Harbour. Apparently, the carrier was heading out on helicopter trials



*Sturdy rations for everyone,
including Pat*



The fleet at Island Harbour



Tegen at Island Harbour. Happy Birthday Paul!



Noggin the Nog at Island Harbour

Island Harbour – day 2

Tue 18th

Instead of the planned sail to Southampton and Ocean Village the crews mostly decided to stay put, dodge the rain and enjoy some of the Island's attractions including Osborne House and the IoW Steam Railway.



*Shall we postpone
our excursions
across the Island?*



Isle of Wight Steam Railway at Haven Street Station



Gentle ride through the countryside



Locking out from Island Harbour



Thanks to the lock keeper for his amiable assistance



Down the Medina River from Island Harbour towards Cowes. Oh good – one blast – turning to starboard!



Oh dear – three blasts – my engines are astern!

Bembridge – day 1

Wed 19th

A few boats had said farewell to the rally at Island Harbour and departed for home ports early on Tuesday morning. However, most of the fleet set off for Bembridge from 08:00 onwards on Wednesday, with help from the marina staff who managed to get six boats through the first lock.

The trip eastwards saw very light winds and flat water, which lead to a fair degree of motor-sailing past the forts to St Helen's.



Vagabond off Ryde, en route to Bembridge



Amigo off Ryde

As ever, the Bembridge Harbour staff were ready to greet us and help with mooring lines, making us all feel welcome.

Several crews tucked-in to a sea food lunch courtesy of the Best Dressed Crab.



Tender to Sniff with the Best Dressed Crab in the background



Brading Haven Yacht Club



As ever, the Club looked after us really well



That weather on the horizon looks a bit iffy



We're all so settled in, maybe we'll stay an extra day?

Bembridge - day 2

Thu 20th

After various passage planning and weather discussions, most crews decided to relax in Bembridge and stay on for an extra day, instead of spending Thursday in Chichester.



Do we really want to be bothered with sailing in a force 5?

Some were tempted by the “Sunshine Breakfast” at the Baywatch and others explored the beach, Seaview, St Helens and Bembridge Lagoons where the eerie booming of a Bittern was heard.

Having made the decision to stay the extra day, an impromptu Bar-B-Q on the quay was soon organised through the good services of the Harbour Office and bepoke delivery of fresh meat from the village butcher.



Paul & Linda on Maudie IV



Ian & Denise on Loveny



Nigel & Sue on Molly



*John & Rosie on their
new Crabber 24, Tressa*



Peter on Moores Claws

Chichester

Fri 21st

Guided by the tide gauge on the pontoon, the Shrimpers and Crabbers filed out of Bembridge Harbour in calm and sunny conditions on Friday morning. A few boats drifted westwards towards Portsmouth in the hope of picking up light south westerlies later in the day, which proved very fruitful. Others simply motor sailed across to West Pole in the calm conditions. Free flow into Chichester Marina made for a speedy passage though the lock for many.



Sunshine at last!



Continental fenders?



Ah, that's better for the bumpy Solent!

We all enjoyed a lovely end-of-rally supper at Chichester Yacht Club. History doesn't relate how Graham managed to smuggle four enormous new Crabber fenders below decks for the whole week, but these were unveiled at the club as a thank you present to Julian for yet another excellently organised rally.



The Steve Evatt Trophy was presented to Peter Moore recognising that, not only was he the only participant to make it to the start of the Rally single-handed from Chichester, but he also bravely took Julian under his wing as crew on Moores Claws for three whole days!

A big thank you to Julian and Mary

...and also to everyone on the Rally, who chipped in to make the event such a success despite the iffy weather.

Acknowledgements: Nigel and Sue would like to thank all those who contributed photos and anecdotes for these Chronicles. Sue apologises for any perceived likenesses in the cartoons, which are purely accidental!