

The Joys of Motor Cruising

From Nigel Cooper & Ann Headon

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I must say it was quite a wrench to give up sails in favour of motor, but not wishing to give up life on the water altogether, Ann and I considered that perhaps it was time to go to the “dark side”. We found “Cloud Nine”, a 26 ft Saga (no jokes please), on the hard at Shamrock Quay, Southampton, and instantly felt that she was an ideal cruising boat for us, and we have not been disappointed. And now we don’t feel so bad on days when we pass by yachts searching for wind, or reefed down hard and motoring slowly to windward !

At the end of August we decided on a two week trip to the Solent, and set off for Chichester Harbour on 26th in windless smooth conditions. Delightful. Despite it being a bank holiday weekend, East Head was not too crowded and, having done our calculations, we dropped anchor. 5 hours later we were almost high and dry, listing gently to starboard! Frustratingly yachts either side of us were still floating, and it seemed we had floated over a ridge in the sands. So when the tide turned later that night, we decided to raise the anchor and we motored to Itchenor to pick up a buoy and get a comfortable night’s sleep. Before leaving next morning however, and just when we thought we had got away with it, the Harbourmaster came alongside for his fee.

We set off in very smooth conditions to Gosport Marina, where we get free berthing as Premier berth holders. We had promised my son and family a day in the Solent, and they joined us on Sunday morning. After a tour of Portsmouth Harbour, and a good view of the new Aircraft Carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth docked at Portsmouth, we headed for Cowes with my 2 year old grandson, Jacob, doing his best to twiddle with every switch and knob on the boat on the way. Fortunately he quickly tired of this game, and fell asleep. We motored up to the Folly for lunch. Very busy here, but several spaces were available and there seem to be more mid river pontoons now, so we stopped on a pontoon for an hour or so.





Heading back down the Medina River, we then decided to motor on to Ryde. Ryde Harbour has become a favourite spot of ours on the Isle of Wight. Accessible via a narrow channel only just around HW, once settled alongside the harbour wall, it's only a quick scramble over the harbour wall to get onto the sandy beach to enjoy a very safe and pleasant paddle in the sea. After ice creams and sticky buns, it was

time to head back to Gosport, and a lovely Chinese meal at the Great Wall to end the day.

With the fine weather still holding, and a good forecast for the remainder of the week, we set off on Monday morning for Poole harbour. While the run to Poole was smooth, the entrance



near the chain ferry was churned up by many fast power boats and we bounced around a bit before heading off down the channel to the anchorage at Pottery Pier on Brownsea. This is usually a lovely spot to relax, but we should have known better as it was a Bank Holiday. With four boats and fast power boats regularly passing through the anchorage, our stay was a bit bumpy. However the evening proved more comfortable and we enjoyed

watching many dinghy classes that were racing nearby. Next morning was much better, and we inflated the dinghy to row onto Brownsea in very calm conditions. The island is always very interesting as it has a wealth of wildlife, and walking the length of the island we saw many red squirrels, pheasants and peacocks. After a hot pasty at the café, we strolled back to the dinghy.

On Tuesday we motored along the marked channel towards Arne, and anchored in the Wych Channel. This is a very quiet spot on the west side of Poole harbour where deer often come down to the water's edge. Ann decided to go in for a swim, while I just hung onto the stern ladder and floated around in the lovely warm water, attached with a line. One day I will learn to swim! Later we rowed ashore and spotted some deer and a few grey squirrels and we paid

a visit to the bird hide where we watched wading birds, ducks and geese including avocets. Back on board Ann spotted a couple of seals playing near the shore.

After a couple of peaceful nights at anchor, we needed to top up supplies, so booked into Cobb's Quay marina in Holes Bay. This meant returning via the Brownsea anchorage, before turning north along Wills Cut, marked with cardinals and red sticks, which took us safely through the shallows to the Town Quay where we turned towards the bridges. The old road bridge is currently under repair, but one half is permanently raised, and on clearing this we then had to await the opening of the "twin sails" bridge, which is quite impressive. Going through on the green lights, we followed the channel round into Cobb's Quay, an MDL marina set in a very peaceful location.

We discovered that the Bournemouth Airshow was on, so next morning we got the bus to Bournemouth, hired beach deckchairs, and settled down with our ice creams to watch the Red Arrows. We found this show a little disappointing when compared with the Eastbourne Airshow, as there was only one aircraft doing "acrobatics" and apart from the Red Arrows, no modern fast jets. However, we later enjoyed a lovely evening meal at Cobb's Quay Yacht Club, and there was live musical entertainment for our second night there.



Looking ahead at weather forecasts for our return journey, it seemed that there were to be only a few short decent weather slots for us to make it back to Brighton, so on Saturday we set off for the Solent, with a fairly smooth run to start, but with wind and rain brewing up we headed for Ocean Village marina at Southampton. Ocean Village, once the established home of the international sailing events, is now overbuilt with huge blocks of flats, one of which is designed to resemble a large cruise liner. The facilities are good however, and berthing was straight forward. We decided on a couple of nights here to await the better weather, and tried out the local hostelrys.

Monday's weather gave us a brief chance to move on quickly to Gosport Marina, where we spent our time mostly tidying up the boat, sorting out the storage areas, and generally making the boat more "user friendly". Useful, because I got to know where Ann had hidden most items that previously I could not find, including the cakes!

Tuesday's forecast promised us a decent trip as far as Littlehampton and we set off very early to make the best of the tide. We cruise at about 8 knots on average, so 3 hours should have seen us smoothly and safely in port. However, the wind picked up very early, and at the Looe Channel we were experiencing up to 2 metre waves which gave us a few interesting moments.

We do miss having a heavy keel under us! Once through the Looe however, things improved a little, and we surfed at times up to 12 knots on our approach to Littlehampton. Once safely in the river all was calm, and we were glad to tie up alongside the visitors pontoon. We spent a couple of days waiting for the weather to settle down for our final run home on Thursday. It had been an interesting but enjoyable cruise. What we learned on the way is that drawing only 0.8 metres, and being much lighter than our previous yacht, we have to give more attention to the forecast of wave heights, which we find wind guru useful for, as well as some other internet based info.

A number of modifications made to Cloud Nine since purchasing her had made our trip quite comfortable. We had put in a more efficient gas hob/grill to replace a two hotplate paraffin cooker which was turned out to be either on or off with no ability to control heat; the addition of a microwave cooker helped during our times in port; a new canvas aft end cover replaced a leaky old canvas; a new electric windlass with 30 metres of new chain replaced 10 metres of rusting chain and gave us confident anchoring (except when we were over a sand bar!); 4 more 240 volt electric points around the boat made life more comfortable in port, and getting the previously unused immersion heater properly wired up and working also had its uses at times. We are now definitely getting used to comforts in our old age! On our return to Brighton a long awaited new epoxied wooden roof with hatch replaced our aging canvas top, giving us more weather protection, so we now look forward to our next cruise with even more relish.