

AND AFTER? - THINGS DIDN'T QUITE GO TO PLAN.....

On our Hurley 24/70, Hilary and I attended the 50th Celebrations in Plymouth and had a great time, meeting many new people and boats in stunning condition, not to mention the quite moving experience of being one of so many Hurleys converging and sailing in formation past the RPCYC. It was, thanks to the dedicated and meticulous planning of Tim, Steve, Adam, Ian and their team of supporters and contacts, plus superb and highly appropriate venues, a truly wonderful weekend.

However, after the official end of festivities on Sunday afternoon, there were 17 people and 12 boats wanting to explore the upper reaches of the Tamar river to Calstock, and the tides were perfect for this, rising for most of the evening. As our mooring is in Calstock, also, since last week, that of Jo and Martin for their Hurley 20 Spindrift, we planned to lead the group upstream some 11nm to the moorings of our boatyard, hopefully without anyone going aground on the early flood. We needed to be moored, landed and at the pub by 2000hrs for our reserved tables.

The first part of the journey we were able to sail with reasonable wind under jibs but the wind gradually died south of the Tamar bridges. However, we continued upstream by motor and reached Calstock on a very pleasant evening and in good time. The tide was now at its strongest and everyone needed to get a mooring of the appropriate depth for their boat, as many fall too shallow for the fin keelers. Our task in Gallivanti had been to see everyone on a safe mooring and ferry them to the public pontoon before anchoring just off in a deep hole and rowing a few yards to the slip by the pub in the inflatable. We would then ferry them all back afterwards.

Sadly, it didn't work that way, as I first went up with the H22s to a mooring prepared by the yard to take two 22s moored fore and aft together to keep them from swinging into the overhanging trees. One had attempted to pick it up but the tide was very strong and he had sensibly withdrawn as the rope between the buoys could not be lifted because it was too taught and had no other pick up facility. A large vessel was moored downtide keeping it tight. I tried to get a rope through the ring but before I got that far, a surge took my bow over the buoyed rope, and the pressure of water heeled her, locking the masthead into the trees, with considerable deforestation taking place, and I found myself in the worst situation, with the rope having slid under my fin keel ending up between skeg and fin under great tension with the mast held by the trees. I slowly managed to walk myself uptide of the bow in the dinghy and get a line on the taught strop to make the situation stable. However, a gamble to take some tension off the rope by risking the engine to get the bow secured against the tide as my strength was barely adequate, ended in a locked gearbox and throttle control as the rope went immediately round the prop. We were then lucky to have a phone signal and Colin Spraggs of Vixen, (ashore) kindly raised someone at the yard to bring the launch up and pull us out of the trees. Needless to say, I then cut the offending rope both sides after adding stern warps but couldn't release or turn the prop.

We were acutely aware that skippers now had to find their own moorings and that I was not there to check their positions and ferry them ashore. I could hear on channel 72 that people were asking who was going to get them ashore. There was probably three quarters of a mile between the boats, spread on both sides of the railway viaduct. I later learned that Tom Eaves had ferried crews one by one to the pontoon after they had found a mooring and it seems they all made it to the pub. Many thanks for that, Tom!

Our boat was made safe and the launch dropped us ashore too, just as the chef was knocking off. We entered the dining area to a heartening cheer from the group and Wendy and Robert Vere from the only Signet of the weekend very kindly got our drinks in – Thanks very much to you both – we were certainly ready for that! The Chef managed to rustle us up a meal (Thanks, Tamar Inn) and the evening continued with our feeling rather stunned after our unexpected experience.

Getting back to the boats was quite challenging. It was very dark on the river but Martin and Jo bravely took two boatloads on their Hurley 20, the first upstream of the viaduct and second for the downstream group near to their mooring, the latter patiently waiting on the public landing stage. The tide was fortunately slack but Jo and Martin had only been on the river for the very first time last Friday, the boat having been launched just in time for the celebrations so they were in an unfamiliar environment, full of moored boats and in darkness. Nonetheless, with a lot of weight on board, Martin brought Spindrift alongside each boat with great care and skill, peering through a forest of people on the deck aided by Jo with her torch, the only source of light, up forward. Many thanks to them for a magnificent job! Hilary said it felt like an Enid Blyton adventure!

Low water was 0430, when I rowed round the corner to find two 22s together on a shallow mooring with the fin keeler lying across the bilge keeler. These were, I think, the only ones to have chosen a mooring by a lump in the river bed. It wasn't long before they were both upright again, but I was sorry that I hadn't been able to check where the boats went on arrival.

As for Gallivanti, we later put her in the slings on the slip and removed 4 turns of rope from the prop. After checking the underwater hull fittings, transducer etc for damage, we put her back in and luckily, the engine started and the gear controls were back to normal.

Not an experience we ever want to repeat, except that, despite not being able to help with the moorings or landings, it was a joy to be with such a good humoured, patient and understanding group of sailors – the true Hurley Spirit!

Thank you all for coming to Calstock. We're sorry that we couldn't complete our role or come back down with you in the morning but we hope to see you all again soon!

Tony and Hilary
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