

## Lutine of Helford takes a tour of the West country

Rachel and James Youngman decided to take their summer family holiday this year touring in Lutine of Helford with their four sons Leo, Max, Marcus and Oscar along with Sapna, Leo's girlfriend.



We had originally planned a week in the Portuguese sun, but with the Covid restrictions we settled on a UK sailing holiday.

The plan was to break out of the Solent and with an early start and late finish make it to Dartmouth. Last year we made the trip in 14.5 hours but with a strong wind. I kept a close eye on the weather forecasts on the days leading up to the departure. The predicted wind varied from Easterly to northerly between 4 and 20 knots over the 5 days leading up to our departure on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August but on Friday we were promised 10 to 21 Knots from the North Veering to the East

I was looking forward to getting the asymmetrical spinnaker out and charging down to Dartmouth.

We were very happy with our planning. Provisions were ordered click and collect from Tesco when they opened at 6 am so Rachel and James

crept off Lutine jumped in to the rib back to Mercury Marina for 5.45, picked up the provisions and were back on board at 6.15.

The wildlife had already got active with us spotting a Hare and later a fox crossing near the old Hamble airfield. Back on Lutine the swans that nest at the Badham creek delta and their three healthy signets all came expecting some morning bread and croissants.

Leo and Sapna had got the lines ready and sail covers off so we slipped moorings at 6.30

The morning was beautiful but quite still as we motored down the Hamble from our river mooring next to Badham creek. The river was coming to life with paddle boarders and early walkers on the banks and small fishing boats out for the early catch.

We hoisted the main outside the river and motor sailed to Calshot spit turning towards Yarmouth and the Needles hoping to catch the last of the ebb tide out of the Solent

The promised Northerly 10 to 21 knots turned out to be 4-6 knots so the sails filled but not enough to get us moving so we kept with the motor until we had passed the needles.

With such light air we launched the spinnaker but as the tide turned against, we stayed doggedly close to the needles and at one point drifted backwards towards the needles channel. After two lovely hours of quiet sailing in glorious sunshine, but only making 5 miles from the needles we knew that the plan was Weymouth or Portland and not Dartmouth.

We crossed Poole bay in perfect sunshine passing close inshore getting a fantastic view of the Jurassic coast cliffs and headlands. St Albans head was relatively tame with Neap tides so we were happy to stay in shore and we headed on towards Lulworth and Weymouth.

We were joined by a tired racing pigeon that tried to land on the main sail and fell just regaining control and avoided hitting the deck. She went on circling the boat a few times and disappeared. A few moments later I realised that I was being watched by two beady yellow eyes no further than 2 foot from my head. The pigeon was on the deck right next to the helm studying me very closely. She appeared tired and thirsty on such a hot sunny day. We gave her a pot of water which she eventually took a drink from and then she sat in the shade of a canvas cover. The drama was then repeated with four more racing pigeons taking refuge and a drink. They seemed very keen on going in to the cabin so all the hatches had to be quickly closed.



We picked up a bit of afternoon breeze and sailed in towards Weymouth past all the empty Cruise ships including the Queen Mary 2 at anchor in the bay.

Weymouth was full but we were welcomed to an excellent visitors mooring at Portland marina. Once tied up safely we were visited by a Dolphin that appeared to be guiding in a mooring motor cruiser.

As often happens with Lutine, people come up with interesting stories about their connection to her. A visiting sailor came over and told us a story from Lutine's time in the Caribbean. Lutine's skipper at the time was asked by a friend if he could take a musician client out for a sail. So on came Bob Dylan who had his first lesson on how to sail on Lutine.



Rachel prepared our first on board banquet for our vegetarian and vegan crew.



I had to dream of seafood and steak but the roasted vegetables, couscous and salad was delicious accompanied by a soundtrack of Bob Dylan songs



The next morning we set off for Dartmouth. The tide was with us until 7.30 and then against. We left later than planned and ended fighting a 2 knot tide around Portland Bill. Although we were at neaps I had not fully appreciated the importance of planning for the tidal flow strength and realised that at spring tide we would have faced 5 to 6 knots tide and been unable to make it around the Bill.

The calm winds continued so we had to motorsail across to Dartmouth where we arrived in late afternoon after a hot calm day crossing Lyme bay.



The dramatic entrance to Dartmouth with beautiful but terrifying rocks on both sides of the entrance and a meandering deep water channel guided by leading lights and marker buoys took us safely past Dartmouth Castle to Port and Kingswear Fort to Starboard and on up to Dartmouth

Darthaven Marina welcomed us with an easy visitors berth and clean comfortable wash facilities.

We pumped up our 3D lightweight tender and fired up the 2.3 Honda outboard for trips across to Dartmouth for evening Fish and Chips takeaway for non-vegetarians and Chips and mushy peas for the others – except that they ran out of mushy peas! The tender motor was not quite right so half the crew took the ferry and we limped back across. There was clearly something wrong as we had to have the choke fully out to keep her going. Darthaven outboard services stepped up next morning and cleared out the fuel tank and carb so she then ran perfectly.

I met up with my friend Stuart who had just taken delivery of a 50 foot Spirit yacht and I took the opportunity of a good look around his beautiful yacht. Cold moulded wood hull, fin keel and with modern

spars and sails combined with beautiful classic lines makes for a fabulous yacht. I came back to Lutine feeling like a traitor but immediately realised that there is something really special and unique about her shape and lines that no other boat can match

In the morning we took the coastal path walk to Dartmouth Castle which was closed to visitors but the shop served delicious Devon Ice Creams. We continued on the coast path to the headland in glorious sunny weather picking and eating blackberries along the way before doubling back to Dartmouth. That afternoon we headed to Kingswear castle where there is an inlet and beach for swimming. Once recovered from the cold shock the water was refreshing and perfect for an early evening swim.

Next morning, we set off for the short sail around to Salcombe. The stunning scenery and the porpoises dancing in the bow wave made for a very special trip. We kept as close as possible to land across Start bay and then at Start point were able to see the magical scenery unfold with all the bays and promontories to Gammon point and on to Salcombe coming in to view.

The entrance to Salcombe harbour is guarded by a long sand bar with a narrow deeper channel to the western end of the bar. At neap tides we had plenty of water despite arriving at low water. Having navigated the shallow entrance we passed Wolf rock and fabulous sandy beaches full of people and boats enjoying the sunny day

We were offered a mooring buoy between Scobble point and Snapes point which was a short hop in to Salcombe on the tender or taxi.



With hot sunshine and light winds we were reluctant to sail further west and opted to explore Salcombe. What a spectacle of activity it is on the water in Salcombe with the lovely Salcombe yawls racing all around us. At one stage there were three different dinghy races battling through the full moorings tacking within a few feet of our hull

A day sail to Lannacombe beach the following day for lunch gave us the best sailing of the trip with a delicious lunch at anchor. It and also gave me an opportunity to put on my wet suit and scrub the waterline from in the water.

Max had to return to London for work so on Thursday we said our farewells in the morning and then headed off for a walk. A big grey seal was making its way between the moored boats as we came back with our provisions. We were drawn to a walk to Gara rock via the coast path. A hot day with thick sea mist in the morning created an interesting atmosphere with Gara rock at the high point of the walk. The return inland was along a pre-historic (3500 yr old) cart track path slowly dropping back down to Mill Bay beach and Lutine who was then moored between Smalls cove and Ditchend cove near the beach.



On Friday we started our return to the Solent with a dull grey day and no wind so we motored back to Portland leaving at 5.30. The tide was against us most of the way but we had learnt that we need the tide with us for the rounding of Portland Bill. We were accompanied by at least ten sightings of porpoises and dolphins as we crossed Lyme Bay with most Pods playing in the wake for a few minutes before moving on

Back safely in Portland we were directed to a mooring where we found ourselves next door to another Laurent Giles yawl 'Dark Island' a 60 foot yacht built in 1984 in Aluminium. I still think that Lutine is the prettiest boat but it was great to compare notes.

Saturday was poor weather with fog and no wind so we were not in a hurry to fight the tide, so after a short walk on Chesil Beech in the morning and lunch on board we were ready to go after lunch.

I was excited to see that there was some wind but then realised that it was coming straight from the Solent so sailing against the tide we made a solid 2miles the first hour. Marcus pointed out that at this rate we would arrive home in 2 days so the motor went back on to get us back in to the Solent.

As we approached the needles the wind picked up and backed to a northerly as the tide turned. We could actually sail again past Allum bay and through the Hurst narrows in to Yarmouth making 9 knots

I radioed in asking for an overnight berth and was asked to speak to the berthing master in his rib. Thinking that we were the new Lutine with bow thrusters, we were offered a stern to berth that involved reversing from the harbour basin 100 m to the berth. I took up the

challenge with the help of the berthing master nudging the bow when needed we slid in to our mooring. Everyone in the marina had their phones out ready to film the impending disaster but thankfully she behaved herself and we docked without incident.

The following morning, we said farewell to Leo and Sapna but welcomed friends Rachel and Jonathan on board with their two young children for the trip to Cowes. The weather turned very wet and with light north easterly winds and adverse tide we made slow progress towards Cowes, but well protected in full waterproofs, Jonathan was very happy taking the wheel and learning how to sail her.

Against wind and tide made the short hop in to a long sail which normally would have meant getting the engine on but we persevered and dropped in to Cowes Yacht haven mid-afternoon for our friends to leave and our return to the Hamble.

We finished the day in bright sunshine with enough wind to sail us up to Southampton water and home to the Hamble.