

Club Cruise Anstruther

Saturday 16 July

Saturday 16 July dawned fair with a gentle westerly breeze. Perfect for pleasant sail eastwards to Anstruther. Three boats planned to set out at 10.30 (high tide). They were Point Blank, skippered by Tony Clark and crewed by his son-in-law Matt Thomas; Aquarius skippered by Harry Ward and crewed by his brother John; Maisie skippered by myself, sailing single handed. I was making Anstruther my first night of a week away cruising the estuary. Ian Owers thought he might come and use the opportunity to shake down his new boat Calloo. However, in the event, he had not confirmed his attendance but did turn up in Anstruther that evening. As it happened, we all left at different times. Maisie got away about 11.30 some time after Aquarius but before Point Blank.

The sail down to Anstruther was pleasant; I unfurled my Jib but left the sailcover on the Main. The wind increased steadily throughout the day enabling me to reach Anstruther at 16.30 just after low water. Since low water was 1.9 metres above chart datum, I decided to enter the harbour. On my approach, disaster struck and my home manufactured gear lever on the engine failed. I quickly went about and headed out from the shore to gain some sea room while I sorted myself out. On close inspection, the gearshift was completely goosed and needed a workshop repair. . Since I was making Anstruther my first port of call in a week of sailing I had my dinghy and of course its two horse power engine with me. I mounted the little engine on a swinging arm bracket on the stern but it was totally inadequate for the wind conditions (force four) in which I found myself. Anyway, I got it going and turned Maisie about and headed for the Anstruther harbour mouth under my part rolled Genoa. I was

fortunate that the wind continued to blow from the west. As soon as I entered the harbour, I rolled away the jib completely and the little engine managed fine in the shelter of the harbour wall. Once tied up to a pontoon, I relaxed and waited for the rest of our small fleet to arrive. Both Aquarius and Point Blank and were of course down at Anstruther well before me but since they both draw considerably more than Maisie, they had to kill time. Harry headed over and sheltered behind Fidra and enjoyed a late leisurely lunch. Tony heroically sailed round the Isle of May in fairly wild conditions. They entered Anstruther about 17.30 and 18.30 respectively.

The organisation at Anstruther left a little to be desired. By arriving before 17.00, I got a key to the toilets etc. Unfortunately it was the wrong one for the pontoon I was on. Harry didn't get a key at all so was stuck on his pontoon (as it happened the one for which I had a key though I didn't know it). Tony was in the strongest position since Point Blank is a fin keeler, and was moored against the harbour wall with access to the town. I managed to escape by phoning Tony, who sent Matt over with his dinghy! We had a couple of pints together and I begged a lift back to Aberdour the next day complete with my broken gear lever.

Sunday 17 July

I wakened to a nice July morning with a gentle westerly blowing. I had breakfast and tidied up before locking Maisie and heading over to Point Blank. At 08.30 Tony Judged there was enough water at the harbour mouth so off we set. Once clear of the harbour we set the sails and beat over towards Fidra. The wind freshened a little and in the gusts the lee rail was under water. This did not last and within two hours of leaving Anstruther we were motor sailing.

By the time we were approaching Inchkeith, the sails were only creating drag so down they came to be packed away. We finished the trip home on the engine and moored up in Aberdour about 15.00. My wife Jinty was a bit surprised to receive my phone call announcing my early return. With workshop facilities, the gear lever was repaired before tea time.

Monday 18 July

Monday was a pleasant day and by late morning I was on my way back to Anstruther courtesy of Jinty. That afternoon, I fitted the lever and tried the engine. All was well and that night I went to bed looking forward to the remainder of my sailing holiday.

Tuesday 19 July

Through the night the wind rose. It was only apparent by the increased noise of the flags strung round the harbour. When looking out to sea, every wave was breaking and the forecast was for it to continue strong five to six gusting seven. I decided to stay safe and sound in Anstruther. That morning I met David and Barbara Patterson who had moved "Fari" down from Aberdour some weeks before. They had decided to go home and come back on Thursday when better winds were forecast. This was lucky for me as I got a lift to Pittenweem to pick up hooks for a new storage basket I planned to build. It pays to keep idle hands busy! The day was lovely, sunny and warm as long as you were not out on the water. I had a pleasant walk back to Anstruther, made lunch and got on with my sewing. The forecast for

next day was for the wind to be southwesterly 2 to 3 rising to 4 or 5 later. I decided if it proved to be so in the morning I was off to North Berwick.

Wednesday 20 July

The forecast was wrong, but only in the wind direction, it was west by south west and I was able to close reach with only the Genoa set all the way to North Berwick. I arrived there late morning just as the wind was starting to rise and before it reached force 4 I was safely on one of four visitors moorings supplied by the sailing club.

I had a very pleasant afternoon wandering round this lovely town in warm sunshine. I would recommend any members with bilge keelers to visit North Berwick when there is any south in the wind, I imagine it would be uncomfortable in north winds. It is worth noting I didn't take the bottom at all lying on a mooring just off the harbour mouth.

Thursday 21 July

One reason for my desire to be in North Berwick was that it would be easy for my son Gavin and his fiancé Esa to join me there from Edinburgh. There was a long-term plan that, weather permitting; they would finish the week with me. Gavin and Esa arrived at 12.00. The wind was still westerly and they were keen to get off somewhere. After lunch we set out for St Monans. We reached across the estuary in a light westerly breeze, which was failing as the day wore on. By 16.00 the breeze had disappeared and we motored the last mile and a half

into St Monans. What a nice harbours it is. There is plenty of room, particularly wall space for fin keelers. The bottom is firm and even for bilge keelers and it is well sheltered, once you are in, from all wind directions. A few pints and an excellent meal in the May View Hotel finished a good day in fine style. At about 21.30 the harbour master appeared looking for money. In return for our fee we got the keys to the toilets at the top of the hill above the harbour. As we intended to be out of the harbour by 07.30 the next morning to avoid being trapped by the falling tide we were asked to post them through his office door before we left.

Friday 22 July

As planned, we left St Monans at 07.30, the wind was light and, for a change, from the East. After a struggle, beating in light airs for four hours, we were off the Isle of May. A very large swell was coming in from the North Sea, easily a metre and a half. We started the engine and motored round the East Side of the island. Esa was keen to land on the May Isle because her brother was staying there at the time as a volunteer with the ongoing bird study. It was impossible to land on the east side due to the swell. We continued round to the west of the island and were soon in calm water under the lee. We approached the old west landing stage and dropped the anchor. Leaving Gavin on anchor watch, Esa and I scrambled ashore. The first person we met on our way to report our landing was Lorenzo, Esa's brother. As it was lunchtime we all returned to Maisie.

By the time we finished lunch it was 13.30 and the wind was still light. After waving goodbye to Lorenzo, we set out with three destinations in mind, depending on which way the wind blew. The first and safest was a return to St Monans. We thought if the wind shifted

southerly, Fisher Row would be better and, if the shift was north, then Dysart was the third option. The only problem with all of these was that it would be another early start to get out before being trapped by the falling tide.

For the next two hours we were bounced around on a considerable swell with little or no wind. We headed in towards the Fife shore in the hope of getting an on shore breeze, and it seemed at first that we were in luck. By 16.00 we were again approaching St Monans and the wind was rising, so we pushed on. The wind continued to rise and, after consultation with the crew, we decided to push on for Aberdour. By 17.00 the wind was force four and blowing from the East chasing us home. Just as we were passing the rig lying off Leven, we saw what looked liked a long ship heading towards Fisher Row. We change course towards Inchkeith in the hope of getting a closer look but she was too fast and was well to the south of us when we crossed her track. We did get close enough to confirm she was a long ship with a classic square sail. The wind continued to rise a little and, as we passed Kinghorn, we rolled away the jib. After this Maisie handled much better and we finished the cruise in relative comfort Tired, but happy, we picked up the mooring just after 20.00 in Aberdour. The crew took some time to get their shore legs back after being bounced about for twelve and a half-hours. Jinty collected us and we all went back to Carnock for a well earned meal and a good sleep!

Jack Francis