

# **PEGGY'S CRUISE TO THE ISLES OF SCILLY**

June-July 2011

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## **FALMOUTH**

We spent over week in the Falmouth area in the middle of June in mostly wet and windy weather waiting for a period of settled weather and crew morale was very low at times. We were cheered by contact with Herrag who were discovering the joys of the Fal as a hideaway in bad weather and we had agreed to have our VHF switched on each morning so that we could make a DSC call to discuss the day's boating movements. We now realise what a useful method of communication this is – it saves calling up on Channel 16 first. We all met for a splendid meal at the Heron Inn at Malpas (having struggled to tie alongside the nearby pontoon with the wind pushing us off, gusting at 24 knots – but that's another story).

### **Monday 27 June**

Leaving St Mawes anchorage heading for the Isles of Scilly (hooray!) at 05.00 (boo!) with the fog lifting giving us about 2 miles visibility, no wind – no surprise there. We motor off to the Lizard, the fog has come down to about ½ mile visibility as we round the Lizard, and then patchy to about 200 metres. Fog finally clears at Wolf Rock, still not enough wind to sail as we need to keep up our speed to meet the tidal gates. 2 hours before getting to the Isles of Scilly there is plenty of wind, average of 24 knots gusting 31 knots and, of course, right on the nose. Heavy rain and lumpy sea now. Cruising is so much fun!!

## **THE ISLES OF SCILLY**

### **ST AGNES**

We finally arrive at Isles of Scilly after 11 hours. Go straight into our favourite anchorage for easy arrivals and departure in The Cove, St Agnes, and tuck right in front of all the fin keelers who can't get into the shallower areas – it's great having bilge keels and a shallow draft. Rough seas and wind all but forgotten now as the anchorage is well protected. Herrag is already here, having left the previous day in thick fog!! There is only one thing left to do – a quick tidy up and bite to eat then off to the Turks Head pub with Janet and Dave for a well-earned drink and to exchange sailor's tales of travels.

### **Tuesday 28 June**

Wake up to a calm sunny day with a NE wind, but we are well sheltered in The Cove. My birthday today so we take a BBQ over to The Gugh which is attached to St Agnes by a sandbar which covers at high tide. Spend the afternoon on a secluded beach, chilling out after our long trip yesterday and enjoying the tranquillity, BBQ and glass of wine (or two).

## **ST HELEN'S POOL**

### **Wednesday 29 June**

We head off to anchor in this isolated spot between Tresco and St Martin's. Next morning we move anchorage nearer to St Helen's Island and take the dinghy ashore to explore the parts of the island we can walk round without being attacked by nesting gulls. Visit the ruins of "The Pest House", an 18th century isolation "hospital" for sailors – rather grim conditions we think.

Back to the boat to move anchorage as there is a bit of a swell here now that tide is coming in and the protecting reef of Golden Ball Brow is starting to cover. Move back to anchor off Northwethel nearby, take our picnic ashore and enjoy a read in the sunshine with a glass of wine and lunch – this is the life!!

We have now discovered additional comfortable anchorages in St Helen's Pool to suit different weather conditions, so can add those GPS numbers to our chart for future visits.



## **EASTERN ISLES**

This is a small group of uninhabited islands which provide lovely anchorages for a lunch stop. Our anchorage today was off Little Arthur while we are waiting for the tide so that we can get up to St Martin's. We sit in the sunshine enjoying lunch and watching the seals who are in the long seaweed nearby and pop their heads up from time to time to take a look around. On another trip we have taken the dinghy round to the back of Great Ganilly to see the seals. Once we had a rather fierce looking seal come very close and follow the dinghy so we made a hasty retreat, obviously unwelcome in his territory. Another anchorage off the Ganilly sandbar provides a great place for a picnic when the tide is out and the long sandy bar is uncovered.

## ST MARTIN'S

Tied onto a buoy off St Martin's On the Isle Hotel and have dinner at the hotel – lucky we booked as Sunday seems a busy night. All the hotels seem to be very "posh" but there is no problem coming in casually dressed and everyone is made welcome. We have the luxury here of the use of the showers – clean towels provided! Also tied on to the buoys was a large old boat called White Knight of Scilly which we had seen at Bembridge where it was based for some years while the owners were carrying out restoration work. The chap came from St Martin's and his wife from Littlehampton and the boat had also been on the visitor's moorings at Littlehampton one winter while new masts were fitted.



We enjoyed a BBQ on the beach which was rather spoilt by the distraction of a young couple in a small open boat trying to get the engine going while drifting rapidly away from the shore towards the Eastern Islands. In the end John went out in the dinghy to try to rescue them. They were supposed to be going back to Tresco but were drifting in the opposite direction. Alas the offer of assistance was not well received as they were convinced they could get the engine going, so John persuaded them to accept a tow nearer to the shore and left them to get on with it.

Then off to our special anchorage on the east side of the island in Little Bay – a long sandy beach and no other boats in sight.

## TRESCO

### **Wednesday/Thursday 6 & 7 July**

Strong SW winds are forecast up to gale force for the next two days. Our safe haven for this type of weather is Old Grimsby Sound off the eastern side of Tresco. We have tied to a buoy with ropes doubled up. The wind arrives as forecast, gusting 34 knots, averaging 28 knots, howling through the rigging; only a slight swell in the Sound so this is a good place to be in these conditions.

### **Friday 8 July**

The weather turns calm and we find a new anchorage in Pentle Bay off Tresco. This is truly Caribbean scenery with white sand, blue skies and an island coastline. No need to worry whether the anchor has dug in as you can see it at 4 metres deep, dug well into the sand.

## ST MARY'S

### **Saturday 9 July**

Another glorious day so we decide to do a lunchtime anchorage stop in Watermill Cove off St Mary's. This is a very pleasant cove, just wide enough for a 32 ft boat to swing in, with about 10 metres either side, the cliff wall on one side and rocks on the other. We take our lunch ashore, walk up to the hillside past the Innisdgen Neolithic Entrance Grave and the view from here we can see St Martin's, Eastern Islands, St Helen's Pool and Old Grimsby Sound. We could stay in the anchorage overnight but the wind is forecast to blow in here so we up anchor late afternoon and sail all the way to St Agnes. A brilliant sail; downwind, beam reach and four upwind tacks - sometimes the weather does let you have some fun and makes you appreciate what sailing and cruising is all about.



## **Monday 11 July**

Weather is calm again so we head off round the west side of St Agnes for a look at the puffins off Annett, where they nest, and then a lunch stop at Samson which is a small uninhabited island with a beautiful anchorage. Not many puffins off Annett but we see more as we approach the channel leading to Samson, as well as a seal. Anchor off Samson and row ashore. Explore the island which has ruins of old houses left by the last inhabitants who could no longer scrape a living on this desolate island and left in 1855 to live on St Mary's.

Then onto Green Bay to see if we can find a space in the anchorage there.

## **BRYHER**

Green Bay is a drying anchorage off the island of Bryher. There seems to be a community of mariners (lots of French!!) who come to Green Bay every year and spend their summer at anchor here. We are fascinated by the antics of this community – what do they do all day? When the tide is out there is the ritual of going ashore to collect water; then there is wandering around the bay looking at people's boats; when there is a change of wind forecast everyone moves their anchors so that boats are facing the right way for that wind; Christian (the Frenchman) adjust his solar panels before wandering the rocky areas picking up shellfish and then when the tide is in he goes off in his dinghy fishing. We recognise a Southerly from Poole who we have seen before – they have been visiting these islands for 25 years and have seen some real changes; there is a restored lifeboat based at Newton Ferrers which is a regular visitor and a catamaran from Wales.

This is the ideal stop for boat maintenance so John gets busy scrubbing off the Arun mud and algae which has grown on it before the tide goes out completely, changes the paddle wheel on the log, checks the propeller and clears all the long rubbery strands of seaweed which Peggy loves collecting round her rudders.

Alas, there have been dramatic changes on Bryher since our visit two years ago. Mrs Bushell has retired – she was famous for her home-made bread, cakes, fruit pies and delicious pasties. We wandered ashore to get a pasty and found the shop closed and converted to self-catering holiday accommodation. A new shop has been built elsewhere; no more home-baked goodies. Still, there are the delights of the Fraggie Rock Café and their home-made burgers to enjoy. Alas, the day we visited the burgers were not on the menu – what a tragedy for John! The crab double-decker sandwich did go some way to making amends. As it was raining that afternoon we logged onto their wi-fi and spent some time getting weather reports and catching up on e-mails and AYC news.

The next day we walked around the island in brilliant sunshine and made a note of a couple of anchorages where we spied other boats, so that we can try them on our next visit. Had lunch on the west side of the island at the Hell Bay Hotel. This must be a great spot in rough weather as the force of the south westerlies comes across and the sea crashes against the cliffs and rocks.

## **ST AGNES**

### **Thursday 14 July**

Up early for our last breakfast at anchor in the Isles of Scilly. We are in our favourite anchorage at The Cove, St Agnes. The sea is flat calm, we can see the bottom clearly at 5 metres and follow the anchor chain to where the anchor is buried in the sand. The sun is shining and it is hard to leave this tranquil place. Strong winds are forecast for the weekend so we have reluctantly decided that it is time to leave and head back to Helford.

As we motor out in the flat sea where dolphins come out to bid us farewell, John catches up with his log book and we reminisce about our days in these unique islands. We have spent 16 days here and only 2 days have been bad weather which has kept us in one place.

## **IMPRESSIONS OF THE ISLES OF SCILLY**

It is so difficult to convey the uniqueness of the Isles of Scilly, even with photographs. There is the tropical white sand and clear blue water contrasting with rugged rocky cliffs and heathland; each island is different and special in its own way; an unhurried pace of life – change your clocks to “Scillonian Mean Time” when you arrive; very little traffic, mostly tractors and golf buggies; a friendly greeting from everyone; “hedge veg” – local produce left out for sale outside houses, with an honesty box for your payment; seals, dolphins, puffins and other sea birds; the challenge of negotiating the passages between islands avoiding the nasty rocks.

There are plenty of isolated anchorages to enjoy but you have to keep an eye on the weather forecast and be prepared to move to another anchorage if there is a change. There are no marinas to run to for shelter!

The downside is the cold Atlantic sea – a wet suit is a great advantage if you are brave enough to go swimming.

This is just a glimpse of our stay in the Isles of Scilly. We have been three times now and each time we find new places to anchor and still wonder at the peaceful and easy pace of life.