

RYA Day Skipper Practical Course Falmouth | 17th – 22nd August 2025 Jack Beckly

I began my RYA Day Skipper Practical course with the Falmouth School of Sailing on Sunday 17th August 2025, feeling a mix of excitement and nerves. Having spent months learning the theory beforehand, this was my opportunity to put knowledge into practice on the water. Our yacht, Lily Belle was a Bavaria 34 and once on board I met the other four crew members. The first afternoon was all about introductions, safety briefings, and familiarisation with the yacht. We were shown the layout of the boat, essential equipment, and basic safety procedures, including lifejackets, harnesses, and emergency protocols. We stayed in Falmouth Marina for the first night due to the poor weather forecast and used the opportunity to get unpacked and we all helped to cook a meal in the galley. It was interesting hearing why each crew member was on the course and their different sailing experiences.



Up early and after breakfast, it was clear that the strong winds forecast had cleared through in the night. We left the marina and headed out into Falmouth harbour and the Carrick Roads. Our Skipper, Michelle gave us each a period of time at the helm (under sail), getting used to the boat and trimming the sails. Navigation became the focus, where we took it turns to plot our passage, identifying marks and buoys along the coast. It was good to put the theory I had learnt into practice. We anchored off Turnaware Bar for the night and once again cooked on board.

By midweek, I felt more confident. We undertook longer passages to the Helford and into St Mawes Harbour (which is busy in August). We practised manoeuvring under engine and sail and coming alongside, picking up mooring buoys and anchoring.

We were also lucky to see a lot of wildlife over this time including dolphins and unusually tuna jumping too.



My favourite passage though was the night navigation. Even though I was sailing in familiar waters, navigating in reduced visibility required heightened awareness, use of lights, and reliance on instruments as well as visual cues. It was a completely different experience from daytime sailing and reinforced the importance of good preparation and vigilance. The night sky was also really clear and the star canopy above us was brilliant to see.

The week flew by, culminating in each of us demonstrating our ability to plan and execute a short passage as skipper, combining navigation, boat handling, and crew management and following this we headed back to Falmouth Marina. By the end of the course, I felt much more capable of skippering a yacht and had enjoyed getting to know the other crew members.

Completing the RYA Day Skipper Practical course has given me a solid foundation to build on, and it has deepened my enthusiasm for sailing. The experience in Falmouth—its varied conditions, busy harbour, and beautiful coastline—made it the perfect place to learn. This summer I am excited to be working as a Watersports Instructor (Sailing & Windsurfing) on the island of Kefalonia in Greece. I hope to use many of the skills I have learnt on this course to good effect and when sailing our Etap 23 in coastal waters back in the UK.

Thank you to the Noel Marshall Fund for their generous support.