

Day Skipper Course

Bryher and Tristan Francis

Ages: Bryher 28 and Tristan 26

9-14 June 2019

Completing our RYA day skipper course was something we have always aspired to do. My brother and I have always sailed from a young age from racing on dinghies to crewing on super yachts. We wanted to progress and to be able to skipper keel boats.



Our first hurdle was completing our day skipper theory. An online course enabled us to fit it in around work. It was a large volume of work with some challenging concepts which kept us very busy.

I recently moved to start a new job in Devon last summer and had been looking for a suitable club to complete the practical course. The south Devon coastline is beautiful and the Island Cruising Club at Salcombe enabled us to explore this further. We were fairly confident that a week in the middle of June would allow us to see Devon in all its beauty, but we got this fairly wrong! Our wet weather gear was donned at all times and our shorts didn't even come out of our bags!

Our first leg was planning our route from Salcombe to Plymouth. This provided a number of challenges with the strong tidal streams and navigating into a busy naval port, which also has cross channel ferries. This was very different compared to sailing around quiet Welsh harbours. Our RYA instructor was extremely enthusiastic and his passion for instructing was

always evident. He took all opportunities to quiz us and brought out flash cards on buoys, lights and rules of the sea at every coffee break!

Day 2, we had hoped to continue down the coast to Fowey but unfortunately, we were weather bound within Plymouth Sound. Our instructor took this as an opportunity to optimise our man over board manoeuvre. After 20 repeats so that everyone had had several turns, he decided that we had had enough practice of that for one day!



Day 3 we embarked on our journey inland, traversing up the Tamar estuary to Cargreen. This provided us numerous challenges, including navigating upstream which got particularly shallow at times. We had to ensure that we correctly calculated the tidal height and our draft to ensure we didn't go aground. The instructor had many more drills up his sleeve for us to practice. We sailed to anchor and sailed onto a mooring numerous times, but given the conditions we found it difficult to slow down in the very fresh winds, so using our initiative, occasionally ended up dragging a bucket in the sea to reduce our speed in the strong tides.



Our original plan for day 4 was to head up the River Yealm to Newton Ferrers. However, the weather continued to deteriorate and we thought we might become port bound again. Tristan who was skipper for that day, decided to make the decision to head back to the safety of Salcombe estuary. With the wind behind us, we surfed the waves back to Salcombe and made the fastest leg back from Plymouth to Salcombe that our instructor had ever done!



Our final day was spent in Salcombe estuary doing lots of practice mooring and sailing to a buoy. Our instructor also took the opportunity to talk to us individually about our thoughts and experiences during the course.

We were very grateful to be awarded funding from the Marshall Award to allow us to complete our Day Skipper Qualification. Tristan is planning to skipper a 45 foot yacht around the Greek Islands with his friends in October and hopes to join the ARC race next year. I have joined a local sailing club and have really enjoyed getting out on the water after work.

Bryher and Tristan Francis