

A Borrowed Weekend

Three generations visit the Isles of Scilly

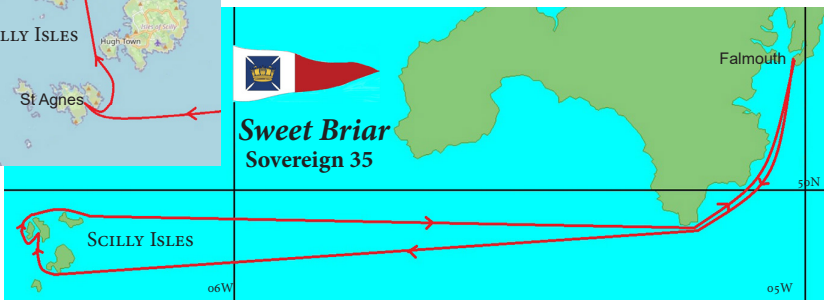
Andrew Pool



Oliver, Samuel and Andrew in New Grimsby Sound

Sweet Briar wintered with Falmouth Boat Construction on the far side of Flushing from where I live. The slogan Stay at Home: Protect the NHS: Save Lives was thoroughly effective in frightening us. Some good fitting-out weather had already gone to waste before, in late April, owners were allowed on their yachts out of

working hours, by prior appointment, in limited time and numbers. Though security guards are not normally known for their charm, the one employed by the yard was a very pleasant man who took our temperatures on arrival and with whom we checked out on departure.



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The Harbour Master had banned all recreational sailing in Falmouth Harbour, and though that was lifted in mid-May, the Government curfew included banning overnight stays. By the time that was lifted suddenly in early July, I was reconciled to leaving *Sweet Briar* ashore - until I was told that it would cost £600 to keep her in the yard until the Autumn. I launched her and had a yacht in commission but no plans for the season.

I feared I had immunised both my children against sailing. Both had cruised with Vryan and me from the carrycot stage but showed no interest once they had fledged. Both had started in Optimists. Oliver had been in the same kindergarten fleet as Ben Ainslie, but gave up in despair after being caught in irons before drifting into a large patch of seaweed, while Ben sailed on to fame and fortune. Lamorna had survived the kindergarten year. However, she became glassy-eyed on the first day of the next season when she was corralled in a group of young Optimists, and the instructor began talking of National Rankings. Actually, I was relieved: over the years I had observed the antics of some of the Optimist Parents and feared I might have become another example. I'm assured that Pony Club Parents display similarly unattractive characteristics. However, Lamorna found her way back via navigation classes when working in London, egged on by her husband, who had never sailed, though I still despaired of Oliver.

However, soon after *Sweet Briar* was launched, Oliver, now forty-two, suggested a visit to the Isles of Scilly with his family of Laura, who had never sailed, and five-year old Samuel. The weather looked good - three or four sunny days, with a northerly forecast going westerly later - ideal for the islands. Also, I had been asked to review Graham Adam's latest revision of the *Isles of Scilly Pilot* in which I had advocated a long weekend there, with a night passage out and a day sail back.

I realised it was a long time since I had actually done it.

So the first time *Sweet Briar* left her mooring for the season was for a night passage to Scilly. I was expecting to depart on the Friday evening and had planned accordingly, but Oliver had a different understanding and turned up with his family on Thursday evening. He had cleared his work diary and I had no plans for Friday, so was persuaded to go there and then. I had checked the navigation lights earlier that day. There was little wind at first, and we motored to the Lizard, catching the young west-going tide before



Approaching St Agnes

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midnight, having watched the moon rise over the east horizon. I had planned on a couple of hours' sleep and decided the best time would be while crossing Mounts Bay. When I put my head through the hatch at 0200 I was sent back to my bunk, as Oliver was so enjoying his night watch. This was the same Oliver who never stood night watches in his youth and whose only contribution to a night passage that I can recall is, having been woken by a commotion in the cockpit, remaining in the hatch and offering to tail a sheet winch. Evidently the immunisation had worn off.

I was allowed to return to the cockpit at daybreak, when the forecast northerly was giving us a beam reach at about six kts. Our original plan was to make for Hats buoy to the north of St Mary's but instead we bore away towards St Agnes, where we anchored in the Cove at 0900, completing a sixty-mile passage in eleven hours.

As we found in the past after a night passage, the grown-ups are tired and the children wake up full



Keeping Samuel amused

of bounce. I read a book while the family visited St Agnes and Gugh. Later Oliver and I went ashore to the Turk's Head while Laura cooked supper. A combination of balance and arthritis makes dinghies hazardous for me these days, but we solved the problem. I attached the main halyard to my lifejacket loops and Oliver secured me while I hauled myself to the shrouds via the Fenderstep.

Then over Tresco Flats to a mooring in New Grimsby Sound. Having endured some interesting experiences with wind over tide there in the past, I welcome a mooring, though the conditions were benign. The crew went ashore on Tresco and Bryher while I enjoyed my book. When they returned, Samuel was hoisted above the boom in the bosun's chair as a swing, as we had often done with Oliver in his childhood. In the evening we had supper on Bryher at the Fraggles Rock, which had opened only the week before. In Cornwall we took the view that we needed visitors for the local economy but didn't really want them. A few weeks earlier we read that St Mary's residents were not welcome on the 'off-islands' for fear of bringing Covid-19 with them, though we were very well received at the Fraggles Rock.

Oliver was anxious to visit Samson, so the following morning we made our way back over Tresco Flats to an anchorage to the north west of the island, where Laura and Samuel played on the beach and Oliver ran to the summit. This was followed

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Sweet Briar off Samson Beach, whilst Samuel and Laura play ashore

by a little rock-dodging as we made our way northward outside the islands to Old Grimsby, where we picked up another mooring and the crew went ashore. I was content to remain on board with a good book.

Tresco is a little less unspoilt these days and for the first time we encountered much RIB activity, with the noise of large outboards puncturing the stillness of the summer evening - a contrast with New Grimsby.

Monday came and we headed homeward, again with little wind at first, though it picked up in Mount's Bay and took us around the Lizard. With a fair wind, one of my favourite passages is from the Lizard to Falmouth, passing along the rocky coast rising from sandy beaches and the fishing villages of Cadgwith and Coverack close-to. Off Coverack the wind dropped and it began to rain, so we started the engine and made for home. We were back on the mooring at 1800; the passage completed within eleven and a half hours.

The sum of our arrivals and departures was an even number, Oliver had taken only two days out of the office and, with luck, Laura and Samuel weren't immunised from sailing.