

# RCC Cadet Cruise September 2021

## Isles of Scilly

By Emily Bush

What a cruise! Our trip began at Mayflower Marina where we boarded *Wild Goose*, James Eaton's beautiful Oyster 485 and after a quick brief and boat induction by Cadet Captain and skipper Will Eaton, we were off! The crew of Emily Bush (RCC), Ossian Bracegirdle and James Allison relished the first sail to Fowey for the night in a bid to start to catch up the other cadet boats on the cruise leaving from Falmouth on board *Sweet Briar*, very kindly loaned to the Cadets Andrew Pool (RCC) and *Wheal-Go* chartered for the week. After one member of the crew was taught the importance of heat when cooking rice, we went to sleep in our very comfortable cabins.



Sweet Briar with skipper Mike Skidmore and crew Tom Bott and Hugh Wilson. Photo by Emily Bush.

The next morning, we set sail at 0900 after a sausage sandwich breakfast. We rounded the Lizard, eerily shrouded in mist and hardly a breath of wind, via the inside passage (overtaking *Sweet Briar* on the way!) and tucked into Mullion Cove to anchor for the night. We met *Sweet Briar's* crew here, swam with a friendly seal and explored the sea caves and smugglers passages under the striking cliffs. Cards and G&T aboard *Wild Goose* followed swiftly after. The next day was the passage to the Isles of Scilly and we had a fantastic breeze and calm seas allowing us to sail on a broad reach with the spinnaker up the whole way. Our top speed was 9.3 knots but 'who was helming' at the time became a debated topic, let alone whether we were going in the right direction at the time! A few pods of dolphins came to say hello and a couple of rounds of 'eye-spy' and '20 questions' later we arrived in the beautiful Isles of Scilly.



Wild Goose and Sweet Briar at anchor in Old Grimsby Sound. Photo by Emily Bush.

We anchored in the shelter of Old Grimsby Sound. I am always surprised by how tropical the islands feel; the bright white sandy beaches and manicured gardens of Tresco can easily make you forget you're in the UK. Our top priority when we arrived was to hunt for more tonic water to take to *Sweet Briar* when they arrived shortly after. Perhaps Tresco Stores was not the place for a serious re-provisioning but needs must. We had also hoped to meet with *Wheel-Go* but sadly the beginning of various issues with their boat meant they were towed into St Mary's.

On our third morning we woke to bright blue skies; summer wasn't over yet. It was very hot and we had soon all jumped in for another swim in the crystal clear water. We went for an explore around Tresco, tried the legendary ice-cream from St Agnes Dairy and climbed up Cromwell's castle near New Grimsby Sound. Being keen surfers, Tom Bott and I were amazed to see the surf break on the two rocks named 'Golden Balls' west of St Helens was



An evening at the Seven Stones Inn. L-R Tom Bott, Emily Bush, Ossian Bracegirdle, Will Eaton, Mike Skidmore, James Allision, Hugh Wilson. Photo by Will Eaton.

breaking in big blue barrels at the North of Tresco. Sadly, despite some effort we couldn't locate surf boards on the island.

That afternoon we headed to Teen Sound which was slightly more sheltered than the original plan of St Helen's Pool, and a fun navigational challenge following the narrow channel. The elusive Cornish mackerel eventually found the fishing line, and after some more swimming we took the dinghy ashore for supper at the Seven Stones with the *Sweet Briar* crew. Unfortunately, the charter boat continued to have engine troubles and couldn't join us but we were looking forward to seeing them the next day.

The next morning it was mackerel on toast followed by an expedition to the bakery on St Martins for pasties and crab

sandwiches. We left the dinghy on Old Quay which the most picturesque and unspoilt area we visited. It is also a very convenient and short walk up to the bakery and easily accessed at high water. It was at this point that the *Sweet Briar* crew played their first prank by climbing aboard *Wild Goose* and ensuring the washing up gloves were flying proud of the mast. And where was the fishing line?!



Old Quay, St Martins. Photo by Emily Bush.

We had a lovely sail that afternoon to anchor at The Cove between Gugh and St Agnes, including a gentle sail onto the anchor to brush up on boat handling skills. Here we finally caught up with *Wheal-Go* which meant all the boats were together, and there even were a few more girls around - up to this point I had been completely

outnumbered! After a risotto on board, we had a big fire on the beach and chatted and sang sea shanties until the stars were out. It was great to have the whole cruise together and really fun meeting everyone.



Ossian ensuring Will met his transit into The Cove. Photo by Emily Bush.

On day 6, we woke, swam, walked round St Agnes, swam again, got revenge on *Sweet Briar* by hiding some oars and waved goodbye to *Wheal-Go*. We needed to provision as we were getting a bit low on all the essentials (gin this time) so popped to the shops on St Marys.

This was our last day in the Scilly's and the weather was due to turn as more wind and rain was forecast the next day. We had been extremely lucky with the weather on this trip, with wind for our passage there and back, and hot, sunny days when we were there! *Sweet Briar* decided to make the most of the day's sun and left for Cornwall that evening for a night sail, but *Wild Goose* decided to sail to

Watermill Cove (under the recommendation of St Mary's harbourmaster to *Wheel-Go*) which would be sheltered for the night before setting sail for mainland the next day. *Wheel-Go* joined us at the anchorage and they cooked some fish on an open fire on the beach.

The following morning, we were up at 0600 and the wind had picked up to 20 knots. We set our course straight for Wolf Rock. It was very lumpy and waves were breaking over the cockpit – a day for full oilskins! We had sandwiches on deck for lunch which were quite tricky to make at 45 degrees. We saw lots and lots of dolphins playing in the stormy waves and even saw a vertical Minke whale mid-breach and completely out of the water. Only James actually saw this (so he says) but it did emerge to surface a couple more times and hear the whoosh of air from its blow hole!



The crew of *Wheel-Go* in The Cove, L-R Ruth Avery, Bob Page, Rory Trafford, Georgie Waite, Emily Chavasse, Matt Irwin. Photo by Will Eaton.

We made it to anchor near the entrance of the Helford River for 4pm and met *Sweet Briar* there. They'd had a fantastic night sail under the stars with phosphorescence flickering on dolphins' backs the night before. We also met Peter, Wendy and Will Whatley aboard *Henry* and were very kindly invited aboard for drinks and nibbles. *Wheel-Go* had to leave for Falmouth as their charter ended the next day, but the crew of *Wild Goose* and *Sweet-Briar* were joined by Will Whatley for supper at Helford River Sailing Club for a supper of scampi in a basket.



A slow start to the Falmouth Work Boat Nationals in the Carrick Roads. Photo by Emily Bush.

On the final day we motored into Falmouth to watch the Falmouth Working Boat Nationals and it was lovely to see the traditional boats and colourful sails. Unfortunately, the wind had completely dropped so we had to motor most of the way back to Plymouth. One of our crew members James had spontaneously decided to sail to the Canary Islands the next day, for a transatlantic yacht delivery so we helped him prepare before our cruise ended.



All the cadets together at last in The Cove. Photo by Will Eaton

We all had a great time, made possible by Cadet Captain Will Eaton's dedication to providing a cruise in a very difficult year and realising the potential of UK waters when international travel is still very uncertain. We can't wait for the next Cadet cruise in 2022. If this year is anything to go by, it's going to be great!

Thanks must also go to Andrew Pool for generously lending his lovely boat, and to Bob Page for persevering on a very unforgiving charter boat!