

GCCC Rally to Dan Bran Pontoon 16/17th April 2016

Woof! Woof! My name is Whisper, and I'm a very black spaniel sort of dog, and I was lucky enough to be taken away by my owners on our lovely boat this weekend. We started from near the entrance to Northney marina, and went all the way down to Lymington – it was a long way for me, I had to keep my legs crossed! I heard my owners say it was a run downwind and then a beam reach – all I know is that I didn't go for a run, and if we reached the beam I didn't recognise it! Grrrrhhhhh!

It wasn't too cold and I like the noise the boat makes when we go fast. All that swishing and gurgling! And it wasn't too leant over for most of the time, so that was ok too. I thought we were going to stop at Cowes as we got really close to it, but we were going too fast because of the tide, so it would have been really hairy turing in there. After a lot longer I could smell the marshes as Lymington. I like going in there – it's fun! I can never tell which side to look out from as we keep turning, and sometimes it's quite shallow. I like the funny sucking sound when we sometimes hit the mud. Woof.

Anyways, this time all the ropes were thrown ashore without too much fussing and cussing and shouting; and I went straight ashore for a doggy loo-stop – thank woofiness! I then met up with lots of other sailors - they seem such nice people – especially that Paul and Diana, and Steve and Marilyn, and Dick and Trudie, Steve and Katrin, and Leon and Jane, Billie, Russell, and Kim and few others too. Not so sure about that big Chris though he has got a very deep voice that frightens little me. Whimper.

It was a nice lazy sunny Saturday afternoon. We were all looking forward to getting some sticky cake later in the afternoon – I heard it was promised in advance, but, guess what, it never happened – Grrrrhhhhh! After going for a short walk I watched my owners (I'm so lucky to have such nice owners) get ready in all their smart clothes ready to go out to the Royal Lymington Sailing Club. What fun I thought I was in for, I like posh clubs, especially if that nice Princess Anne might be there. She always smells of dogs. Then they told me I was going to be guard dog for the boat for the evening! I know what that meansI'm home alone, they have a whale of a time and come back all giddy and tipsy!

They did at least come back at a sensible time– I heard there were 20 people at dinner, and it was really, really, really tasty (so why didn't they bring any back for me? Grrrrhhhh!) They said there were fantastic views over the river, a great sunset, and a nice warm comfortable private dining room. I got to hear some of the many stories that were flying around the table, but can't tell you about the details. Tease! As the club was only about 300 yards from the boat it was all very easy for them, and nobody fell in the water. My owners then took me out for my evening constitutional, and we all settled in for a quiet night – woof! It was going to be cold, but that is what central heating is for after all. Woof.

Until 6 in the morning Grrrrhhhhh – when a passing fishing boat almost threw me out of bed! After breakfast I got all excited, as my Mum mentioned the W word, and although it seemed like hours later, a group of 5 or 6 of us set off around the marshes. Two of the men cried off fairly soon after the beginning, and the ladies talked about them having “man flu”, but I had a good long waggy tail walk. It was nice and sunny and fresh, with great views over the water. Didn't manage to chase any ducks through – Grrrrhhhhh!

Just before we got back to the boat I had to stop, abruptly! That delicious smell – it could only be cake! Thank woofiness! That nice friendly man Clive had put a huge plate of cake on his cockpit table and was enticing passers-by by wafting coffee smells and saying “Come and try my sticky cake”. It

was all a bit Nell Gwyn–like, if you’ll excuse the literary reference. You see, even we spaniels can be clever! We all sat there in the cockpit and woofed down the lovely cake. It was very fruity and slurpy. Woof. And then he told us that he has made it for Christmas and forgotten about it. If you ask me (and no-one did!), it was probably even better for it. Woof.

When we got back to all the other boats lined up along the pontoon (none of that rafting business this weekend), there was all that usual funny talk about “when are you going?”, “isn’t that a bit early?”, “won’t you be going against the tide?”, “I’m leaving it until later”, “I’m staying here”. Then people start untying bits of string and letting boats float away – it’s all so exciting. Except for me, as I know it means I have to keep my legs crossed again for a long time.

So off we went, much more slowly than when we were getting here. We even needed to put on the engine so that we could get home on Sunday rather than Monday! It all went smoothly – as there was very little wind – and we got back to Northney and the lovely grassy dog walk area without anything really to report. Woof! I enjoyed the weekend, I think the others did too!

Today I heard from Chris and Denise my owners that Steve and Marilyn saw harbour porpoises on their way back. They saw them ½ way between Lymington and the Beaulieu entrance, for about 5 minutes, they were heading back south west and were about 30 metres away from their boat. They were diving and then coming up and it was mainly their small black dorsal fins to be seen popping up out of the water. How exciting! I think I would have barked with delight! Woof.