

Poole Open Weekend 26 & 27 September 2026

This was the first Open Weekend that I know of for Dinghy Cruising, and if everyone who said that they would have liked to come (but had something else on that weekend) had been available, we would have had 8 boats. However, only two were able to make it - Steve and Mel in a Comet Trio and Nick G in his Versa.

The forecast for Saturday was flat calm, watery sunshine and warm, and indeed the day panned out that way, with coffee on the fabulous terrace of Poole YC until lunchtime, by which time it seemed highly unlikely that there would be any sailing.

Nick went to explore Rockley and then onto Wareham and Redcliffe Yacht Club, and Mel and Steve went to the public slipway at Harbourside 1 Car Park.

Halfway through the sandwiches, a breeze started up and fretted and stopped for a bit, and 15 minutes later a SW F2-3 had started. We mailed Nick, hoping he would join us back at Poole YC, unfortunately not as he got the email once home. So Mel and Steve went for a gentle sail against a full Spring ebb tide and got about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way to Rockley before the end of the sea breeze and the merciless ebb ground us to a stop. 50 minutes to get there, and 10 minutes back, and it was just lovely to be on the water.

The forecast on Sunday had a F6 in the Inshore Waters, so we weighed up the risks of going for a sail: a SW is all upwind from Poole YC so we could come back under jib only if it got too much, and sailing inside the harbour has always slightly less wind than the inshore area. With a reef in both the Versa and the Trio we headed firstly for Shell Bay. On the way, just by the windmill on Brownsea, we were confronted by huge numbers of kayaks, 10 RIBs and several bigger boats, accompanying 306 swimmers in the "Round Brownsea Swim". An extraordinary sight and briefly we had front row seats.

We were confronted by the Spring Flood, and it took lots of tacking in shallow waters along the Brownsea shore to get over the tide, then over to Shell Bay (and yes, we did hit the island with our centreboard). We stopped at Shell Bay just to orientate and make decisions as to where next.



The sky was darkening, there were spots of rain, the wind had shifted South and it looked OK to sail to Arne, which was a reach most of the way. We went south of Green Island (tranquil in the wind shadow) and then a big arc around the shallows to beat up past Round, and curve away to a run past Arne.



Arne now has a specific Landing Site, which we took advantage of for our second stop, in a rising wind.



It was lovely on Arne (no seal to be seen), and we then made our next choice, straight back or via Pottery Pier. Since Pottery Pier was a reach, and we could change our plans and run home under jib only, we chose to sail to Pottery Pier - some lovely planing under reef, and everyone got wet with the splashing from the spray.

Pottery Pier was achieved very quickly, where we stopped briefly to admire the pottery, and then the wind was continuing to increase (very top end of F5) so we made it safely to Poole YC by way of a couple of planing broad reaches.

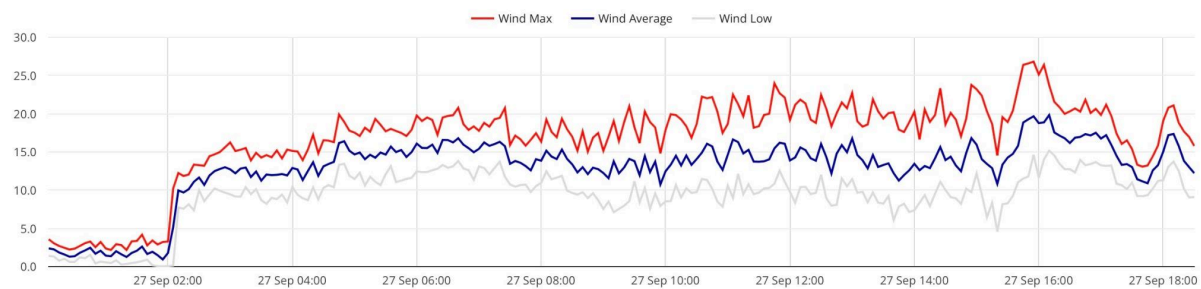


It was an exhilarating sail in a beautiful location.

Once we packed up we repaired to the lounge and partook of Christmas Roast Dinner (£15, an absolute bargain) and chatted until it was time to leave.

While only two attended, I learned that Poole YC host an event beautifully, they have space for the boats, the slipway is easy, the sail to the entrance can be interesting as it was a beat with a SE wind, and Poole Harbour continues to be stunning.

Steve.



Showing that during 08:30 to 12:00 the wind was gently rising...