

## The Restoration of So-So Continued...

Author Derek Clark

Being a teacher I get a very healthy summer break, but among teachers it is known as the shortest holiday of the year. By the time that you have recovered from your latest nervous breakdown it is time to start planning to go back.

I booked a four day RYA Dinghy Sailing Course to happen over four Saturdays in July/August. It was a disaster. Two Saturdays saw me leaving at lunchtime with my diabetes playing up. The third was a boring up and down a very small and shallow lake with variable winds blowing over the water, and unhappy fishermen lining the banks. The dinghy was a 16 foot Wayfarer, only a foot shorter than my Leisure, and the instructor a close relation to God (almost as old and twice as pedantic) The fourth day never materialized, in spite of paying an extra 220, and I wrote the whole thing off as a very bad experience.

Very little got done on So-So because my middle daughter returned home from three years working in Japan, and my two 1930's Morris'es needed fettling. However, my self steering vane arrived having travelled in the forepeak of the Naomi J. from Norway to the Shetlands, and then by post from there. See this site for details of the Naomi J. <<http://home.no.net/naomij>> and my good friend Owen. He is part way down the Scots' coast now and I hope to meet him soon. The vane is big! I have also decided that, given the limits of my sailing experience, it is a bit over the top for starting out. It is in my cellar until So-So and I have danced around a bit by ourselves.



Derek Clark  
takes the  
wheel aboard  
the Rival 41  
on his week  
outing at  
sea. We're  
having fun  
now!

On the 26th August I went on the RYA Competent Crew course run by Sea Island Sailing School out of Port Dinorwic on the Menai Straits. I had a fantastic week. Two Comp Crews, three Day Skippers (the next course up) and Stan Roberts the real skipper on a Rival 41. Even second hand the boat was £170,000 and only three and a half times the length of So-So. It stopped the wife moaning about what I have spent! Over the five days of the course we circumnavigated the Isle of Anglesey, did 128 miles and had a force 5/6 on the last day. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and learnt a lot; especially about Stan's cooking. Every recipe was one of his Grannies; and everyone was out of a tin!

First night  
anchored off  
the end of  
Bangor Pier  
in the Meni  
Straits,  
North Wales



My diabetes was fine and I got to pull ropes, raise and lower sails, take the helm and enjoy a night sail while the day skippers worried about which buoy was which, and where. I never felt sick at all and slept like a log each night rising to a chorus of complaints about the length and depth of my snoring. I told them it would be ok because SoSo and I will be going solo most of the time.

I know Anglesey well, it is a favourite holiday haunt of the English Midlands, but I have never seen it from the sea before. A wonderful island spoilt only by the buzz of jet skis. The main benefits of the course for me, besides all the practical experience, was finding that I enjoyed being at sea, useful having already spent a wad of money, and finding out that the dangerous bits on a chart are a lot further apart in real life. Finger width gaps between wrecks, rips, and rocks translate into hundreds of yards in reality. Thank God! Just finished the fourth section of my Day Skipper theory course and only one section to go before the final exam. I may then sign up for the Day Skipper practical.

So-so is progressing. Modified the trailer for bow forward towing and removed some of the rust, got new cushion covers sown up by the wife and finished changing/blanking the side windows. Loads to do but hoping to be sailing for Easter.



South Stack Lighthouse, Isle of Anglesey, North Wales view from the south.

High speed ferry from Ireland to North Wales. From speck on the horizon to bloody big in a few seconds... Beat us into Holyhead Harbor.



Relaxed skipper Stan Roberts, entrusts \$250,000 of Rival 41 to dinghy racer Dave Jenkins.