

Minehead 'Boat-less' Rally, 11-13/10/19

Wet and wintry seems to define our 'Boat-less' Rallies these last three years. Minehead was no exception. How lucky we have been that our sailing rallies have been blessed by generally, excellent, weather! Keith Bunker had carefully, even meticulously, planned the Minehead Rally to work in all weathers – and work well it did! Brilliantly!

35 of us gathered at the Premier Inn, Minehead on Friday evening for dinner at the adjacent Brewers Fayre. After an excellent dinner, Keith showed the BBC/RNLI film of the rescue of Oronsay from the rocks of Lochaline in 2018. Oronsay dragged its anchor in a storm last summer whilst on cruise with Keith, Nicky, Eric Lowe and Pat. Eric entertained/shocked us with a PowerPoint explanation of the mishap after the film!



It was an early start next morning as we gathered at Minehead Station for a steam-locomotive-hauled train to Bishops Lydeard. The West Somerset heritage railway has one of the longest steam-hauled lines at roughly an hour and a half each way. Keith had arranged for us to have a reserved carriage next to the locomotive for both outward and return trips, a delight for all our would-be, anorak-clad, train spotters! On arrival in Bishops Lydeard, most of us headed for the privately-owned water mill museum with its incredibly diverse and fascinating collections, from



the mill itself through old carriages, motor cars, bicycles and a Gypsy caravan, wood-working and blacksmithing paraphernalia to old radios and cameras! After a pleasant lunch at the 'local', several of us enjoyed a visit to the old church before congregating back at the artisan Quantock brewery and a chance to learn something of the complexities of running a small craft brewery with a huge range of products. Despite the forecast, we all arrived back in Minehead late that afternoon, happy and dry.

That evening we enjoyed another fine dinner in the Brewers Fayre followed by a thorough, fascinating talk on navigating in the Bristol Channel. Mark Cornish, one of our own, has many years of experience of the area, living and keeping his boat in Burnham on Sea just a few miles from Minehead. His boat, Shinroc, is an Eclipse 33 with bilge keels. I came away thinking that bilge keels might well be the key to navigating, especially in the upper reaches of the Channel! That and a strong engine to handle any foul tide!



Sunday morning was another early start (well – for me anyway!). A man used to keeping strict deadlines, Keith had already instructed us as to where and when to report for the guided elements of our tour around Dunster Castle. This magnificent stately home on the site of an ancient castle was a definite highlight for me. It was a fortress from Saxon times through to the time of the Civil War when its curtain walls were destroyed. The property of the Luttrell family from the 14th century, it was rebuilt by them as a stately home in the 19th century and occupied by them until some 40 years ago. The National Trust now maintains it. The Bristol Channel once reached up to the base of the Castle mound,



so the views are stunning, particularly as the sun came out in the early afternoon. The medieval village around the castle is also well-preserved and beautiful. We particularly enjoyed the double-wheeled Water Mill (and its associated café!) and the pack-horse bridge, pictured.

Judging by the email response to Keith, this was a most popular weekend enjoyed by all! Well done and thank you, Keith and Nicky!

Tony Wildig

Captain, MOA SW Branch