

NORTH WALES RALLY 2011

After our first and successful North Wales rally last year we decided to return to Caernarfon for this year's rally which was once again hosted by the Royal Welsh Yacht Club.

The rally was held over the weekend of the 17th and 18th September. Twenty members attended which was fewer than usual but it meant we were able to get everyone who wanted to sail onto boats on both the Saturday and Sunday.

This year only three boats attended, Alan and Gloria Parson in *Badger*, Owain Perry in *Jua* and a new boat at the rally Roy Denton in *Ying Zhu* a Freedom 33 formerly owned by Pete Hill under the name of *Pelican*



Badger

Photo by Andrew Bailey



Jua

Photo by Peter Manning



Ying Zhu

Photo by Andrew Bailey

Roy Purchased *Ying Zhu* earlier this year and spent a few months familiarizing himself with the boat and fitting some new instruments before setting sail from Plymouth, hoping to attend the North Wales rally before continuing on to Preston where the boat is now undergoing major improvement work.

For the first part of his journey from Plymouth to Milford Haven Roy asked for crew and my partner Shirley and I volunteered. This was to be Shirley's first proper sail on a yacht and I am pleased to say she fared very well and overall enjoyed the experience although not unexpectedly had a brief visit from the mal-de mare on the first day due to a rather lumpy sea.

Roy undertook the second part of his journey from Milford Haven to Caernarfon single handed in some quite challenging conditions but after sheltering in Fishguard secured to the RNLI emergency buoy which was made available to him after spending some uncomfortable nights anchored in the outer harbour, he arrived safe and well at the Victoria Dock Caernarfon in time for the weekend rally.

On Saturday morning the Royal Welsh Yacht Club opened their clubhouse to allow our members to meet up, have a coffee and chat amongst friends. New members and those visiting a rally for the first time are always made welcome.

Once everyone had arrived they were allocated to the boats of their choice and we ventured out into the Menai Straits.

The Straits run from south west to north east and when strong winds blow from one of these directions creating boisterous sailing conditions, the opposite side of the Swellies are usually much calmer. This year we had strong south westerly winds. Unfortunately there is insufficient time for us to sail through the Swellies to calmer waters and get back again on the same tide so we are restricted to sailing between Caernarfon and the Menai bridges.



Badger sailing outside Port Dinorwic



Ying Zhu and Badger outside Port Dinorwic

Photos by Andrew Bailey



Badger sailing wing and wong



Jua sailing in front of the Britannia Bridge

Photos by Peter Manning

Victoria dock has 49 fully serviced pontoon berths along with a visitors pontoon where, in busy periods, yachts have to raft up under the supervision of the dock master. The pontoon berths occupy only about half of the dock however tour surprise on this visit we found the other half of the dock now serviced with pontoon berths although not yet commissioned we were informed they would be fully operational for the 2012 season.

We are able to sail about two and a half hours before and three hours after high water at Caernarfon before the gate is raised and we find ourselves locked out. This provides us with quite sufficient time for a good sail. The straits are a safe cruising ground even in strong winds.



View of pontoon berths and visitor pontoons and the new but yet to be commissioned pontoons



The dock entrance viewed from the straits and with gate raised viewed from inside the dock

Photos by Andrew Bailey

A half tide gate at the entrance to the dock maintains a depth of water around two metres throughout most of the dock.

The tide runs strongly past the entrance and great care must be taken when entering the dock to avoid being swept onto the dock wall as you enter

Victoria dock stands at the side of the Caernarfon Castle which makes a most impressive view from the straits

Photo by Andrew Bailey



After the afternoon sailing members have some time to themselves to chat, look at the boats or take a walk either into the town or along the shoreline before getting together again in the clubhouse for the

evening dinner. This year we were joined by members of the North West Venturers Yacht Club who had sailed down the straits through the swellies for their annual visit to the Royal Welsh Yacht Club.

The club itself is situated within the castle walls with the entrance rather hidden away under the



Photos by Andrew Bailey

Central archway. There is access from the clubhouse onto the roof over the arches from where races are controlled. There is also access to the main roof from which there is a splendid view of the Menai Straits from Fort Belan at the SW entrance and up the straits towards the Menai bridges.

JRA members met up again in the evening, joined by members of the North West Venturers Yacht Club for an excellent buffet dinner. There was no guest speaker this year but with two clubs present there was plenty of opportunity to circulate, chat and make new friends.

The club is not open on Sundays so we arranged to meet outside the clubhouse under the arches. Members were again allocated to the boats and we ventured out into the straits once more. There was a good wind blowing as we made our way down towards the Menai Bridges, sailing with the tide.



Photos by Peter Manning



As we approached Port Dinorwic we had to thread our way carefully through a fleet of dinghies



racing just outside Port Dinorwic, a regular sight during the summer Photos by Andrew bailey



Entrance to Port Dinorwic
Photo by Andrew Bailey



Members on board Badger after the rally
Photo by Peter Manning

Jua's home port is Port Dinorwic and she has to return to her base rather than Caernarfon at the end of the day's sailing to be in time to lock in. Her skipper then returns his crew to Caernarfon by road.

As the clubhouse is not open on Sundays we have no official ending to the rally and whilst some members make their way home others are invited to join the owners on their boats for a little post rally refreshment after another successful North Wales rally.