

A few words on the 2019 activities of the U3A south coast sailing group

2019 has been a good year for our group with 20 members now and we are starting to move to local community rooms for our monthly winter meetings since we have nearly outgrown members' houses for our venue. We have a cluster of members from the U3As of Winchester, Southampton and Solent (Fareham) so we tend to move around to even up the driving. Now that we have five skippers within the group we can vary our sailing activities more too.

We started the sailing season in April with a 2 day trip to Swanwick on the Hamble and then in May Yarmouth, Isle of Wight. We took out both Phoenix Yacht Club (PYC) boats from their base in Gosport so we had a total of 9 crew spaces in addition to the skippers.

In June the PYC smaller (35ft) boat had departed on her summer cruise to south Brittany and we spent our two days focussing on boat handling on the larger, (40ft) boat in Haslar marina. The day was windy, force 6 and boat handling exercises were challenging to say the least. July saw us going to the beautiful Beaulieu River in a complete contrast of a very calm couple of days.

In the middle of July we were in France for our weeks on the summer cruise, the first week being a gentle potter from Pornic (which is near to Nante) to La Trinite, one of the larger sailing centres of Brittany. The short distance we had to travel allowed us to visit the inland sea of the Golfe du Morbihan a couple of times. This is a very attractive area totally enclosed like Poole harbour but much larger, with rocks instead of mud under the keel and some very exciting tidal flows. We also had an unplanned diversion to another large marina in order to replace the boat's batteries which were no longer holding their charge. This first week was in the French heat wave which gave inland temperatures of 39°C but on the water it was a very pleasant 25-28°C. The hot weather broke after our crew change-over in La Trinite and we were later storm-bound in Lorient for 2 days as we headed up to our change-over port in Brest. Lorient is a good place to be storm bound since we visited the Nazi submarine pens, sailing museum and the pre-Napoleonic citadel, and of course a couple of good French restaurants. Different crew members skippered for the day or for each activity in order to further develop their skills.

We saw dolphins several times during our two week sail but the best sighting was off Brest when we were treated to an acrobatic display by a pod of about twenty and we got some lovely video clips of them around the boat.

In September some of us spent 4 days going to Brighton and back and others did just 2 days there or back. It is always good to enter new ports because it challenges your pilotage skills and gives you great motivation to learn more.

Last year we started an initiative of day sails, using a local RYA accredited sea school, who supply a skippered yacht. This proved popular, particularly amongst those members of the group who prefer shorter sails and those who do not belong to the Phoenix Yacht Club. We have continued to develop the idea this year. Our first trip coincided with the D-Day commemorations in Portsmouth and thus the participants had a fantastic ringside seat for the celebrations and particularly the Red Arrows display. Our second trip took advantage of an offer from a local sailing club who took us out from their base on the Hamble. On both trips the skipper/instructor gave everyone the maximum opportunity to take the helm and develop their sailing skills. A third opportunity arose from two of

our newly qualified U3A PYC skippers who both organised additional day sails in the autumn. We are already planning day sailing activities for next season using all three variants to supplement the longer trips using the Phoenix Yacht Club boats. This should provide a range of activities that will give sailing opportunities to everyone in the group.

Our winter meetings so far have compared our photographs of all our water based activities of 2019 and our future talks will include berthing a boat, shipping forecasts, knots and much more.

New members are welcome and our winter meetings are on the afternoon of the 4th Monday of the month (excepting December) at various venues. Please contact Judith on judithOhankey@btinternet.com for more details.

The attached photos are of the group enjoying themselves in the Solent in a day of sunshine and force 6 winds. Please choose the most suitable.