

# UKSA Trip

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Shipmate @ The AHOY Centre

# UKSA Private Dinghy/Keelboat Course

20/08/15 – 24/08/15

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## DAY 1

We were awoken at 8 o'clock on the first day to eat breakfast, which was a tasty fry up of bacon, sausages and egg. Albi and I went down to the pontoon and met our instructor, Louis. He gave us a quick run down of the essentials of the boat, before grabbing the battery, fuel and BDH. The BDH was a container that contained flares, first aid kit, tool kit and knife, and was a last resort. And then we went sailing. We were on a J/80 boat, a small racing keelboat. I found it similar to a dinghy except for the size. There was a small cabin where you could store rope etc. and a guard rail around the whole boat. As the river is small and there is a speed limit of 6 knots, we couldn't just sail out of there, so we had to use the engine. Once we were out of the 'Small Ships Channel', we stopped the boat and raised the sail. Now that we were sailing, Louis explained some of the rope controls. The winches that tightened the jibs sheets were new to me, and it certainly made the job easier. The main difference was the traveller. This was a rail in the middle of the boat, which pulled the block (from where the main sheet was controlled from) and allowed you to change the position of it. With this, we could point further upward than before. For the morning, we just sailed around the Solent familiarising ourselves with the boat, and we both took turns helming and crewing. There were quite light winds and the morning was calm. The afternoon however, was very different. There was almost torrential rain and the wind picked up massively, yet that didn't stop us. We sailed East alongside another J/80, before turning back. There was a huge cruise ship, in the style of an old galleon called Sea cloud II which we passed. Back on land, as I was packing away the battery, I saw Lionel again, who was an instructor at the AHOY. It was really nice to see him again, especially seeing as he's going to start a round the world trip soon. After dinner in the evening, Reese and Madeline took us crabbing, where (believe it or not) we caught some crabs.

## DAY 2

The next day we were greeted by much nicer weather. It was sunny all day and there was a good amount of wind. Louis told us we would go spinnaker sailing, which got me very excited. The kite (spinnaker) is a large bag-like sail at the front of the boat that you would use when sailing downwind, and can let your boat sail much faster. The kite for the J/80 was huge, and on the water I couldn't wait to use it. We sailed West for about 2 hours until we were far up enough the tide that we could use our spinnaker. Using the kite was pretty much the same as on a dinghy, except the sheets had to be wrapped around the winches. The second the spinnaker was up and it had caught the wind, you could feel the boat lurch forward. We had already furled away our jib (the smaller sail at the front of the boat as we didn't need it). After about an hour of kite practise, we anchored and had lunch. Sailing back was really fun. As we were up tide, with the wind behind us, when our kite was up, we flew along the water, almost getting onto a plane (which is where the nose of the boat is out of the water and the boat is riding the waves). When we were coming back in to the dock, I got to try out using the engine. We lowered the sail in front of the river, and then I started the motor. It was only a four horsepower outboard, but it was still really fun driving down the river. I had to park the boat, which was harder than I had expected, as you have to look out for the other boats! After crashing a few times...I managed to park, and we packed away the boat. That evening, Reese took us paddle boarding, which is something I've never done before. It looked pretty easy, but after falling in several times, I decided it wasn't as much as I thought... We did a few races, and played a game of gladiator, where you have to push the other person off their board (and then get wet). It was a great day of sailing.

## DAY 3

Today was the sunniest of all the days, and I got a bit sunburnt. Again, we went out at 9 o'clock, and I was able to drive us out of the dock. Reversing out, then spinning the boat around was much easier than the parking...and I only nearly crashed! It was interesting to see how different the river is to the Thames, my favourite being the floating bridge. Near to where the Red Funnel Ferry comes in, two roads go to the waters edge and just stop, the river in the way. To solve this, there is a kind of barge, than repeatedly goes across all day and night, taking cars to and fro. It runs across on two huge chains, and is quite an amazing sight. The highlight of today was when we broached and almost lost our instructor. Albi was helming while the spinnaker was up, and was trying to get a good course by sailing on a beam reach, when we were hit by a gust. The boat leaned over massively, and Louis who was by the shrouds, went into the water, knee deep, horizontally. Through this, he was asking Albi to bear away, but because of the noise of the sail, waves and wind, he couldn't hear. It was a good 20 seconds before Albi got the message, and turned downwind. In spite of it all, Louis wasn't mad, and everyone laughed it off. To change the activity, we decided to do some Man Overboard drills or MOB. The unlucky victim was a fender with a buoyancy aid called Bob. We practised the technique for a while, until Louis decided that if he did fall in, we had a decent chance of being able to rescue him. In the evening, we had a new person looking after us called Alice, who took us into town, where we got a chance to explore the small village of Cowes.



## DAY 4

The fourth day was where the weather started to change. It was forecast for rain, but we weren't quite prepared for what we met. We had a new instructor called Max, who took us out on the J/80s. In the morning the rain was very heavy and the wind, very strong. Luckily, I had on salopettes and a coat, and I didn't get very wet at all. Unfortunately, the same couldn't be said for Albi who got soaked, through his coat. Battling through the waves and the rain, we practised coming alongside drills, which is simply where you park next to a boat or object, and some more MOB's. When we came back on land for lunch, we were greeted by the drier room at the UKSA. While it may not seem like much; a room full of wet clothes, it was heated and became a heaven after sailing in the pouring rain. On the other hand, it didn't have the nicest scent... Luckily for us the clouds went in the afternoon, and we were back on the water. It wasn't quite sunny, but we all preferred it to the morning. Later on, as we were able to take the sail down, the engine broke. The rip cord, which is meant to recoil after you pull it, got stuck, stopping us from starting the engine. Embarrassingly, we had to call for help and another instructor at the UKSA came on a RIB (powerboat) and towed us back.



## **DAY 5**

The weather on our last day at the UKSA said goodbye with the worst conditions it could. Rain started at 7 o'clock in the morning after thunder in the night, and went until 1 in the afternoon. In spite of the torrential rain, and flooding in other areas of the Isle of Wight, we went out a sailed. In stormy conditions, sailing can be really fun. You get a real surge of adrenaline when you're battling the waves. This kept us happy until the cold really got to us, and we went in a bit early. On land, throughout the day, Max went through some Seamanship Skills with us, where we made our own passage plan using a map, compass and pair of compasses. When the afternoon came, we were happily warm enough, having stayed in the drier room the whole lunch, but we couldn't go on the water. Lightning was forecast, and it would've been too dangerous. Instead we learnt about some emergency procedures, and look at the BDH box, including the flares inside and how to use them. After only a couple of hours, it got to the point where we had to go home, and our amazing week at the UKSA was up.

## **SUMMARY**

This week was filled with the most breath-taking sailing I had ever done, in a wonderful place. All of the staff were friendly and experienced, and the boats were amazing to sail. My favourite part had to be when the spinnaker was up, and we were shooting along the water. I learnt so many things, including how to use a traveller, winches, outboard, spinnaker on a keelboat and much more. I hope to use these skills in the future partly to help with my dinghy sailing, and also maybe take part in some more keelboat/yacht sailing in the future. I would especially like to thank The Royal Thames Yacht Club for funding this trip for me. It was a once in a lifetime experience and I could never have done it without your funding. I am so grateful for you giving me these skills which I can take with me wherever I go to sail.

**THANK YOU!!!**

