

WOA SOUTH WEST GROUP – BABBACOMBE MEET AFLOAT 09-10 JULY 2022

By Paul Moorhouse in FIREBIRD OF FINGEST

As far back as Spring 2021 our Chairman, Barbara Box, wrote a tongue in cheek article in the WOA magazine about Covid and how we have battled on despite it. Well....never a truer statement was made.

A few days before the Babbacombe event, which was showing an excellent turnout, nine boats plus some Westerly wheels in addition to a promising weather forecast, we had an unexpected disaster. I received a 'phone call from Babbacombe Corinthian Sailing Club informing me that there had been an outbreak of Covid amongst the membership, and they were unable to commit to the Saturday evening catering. That's a new one! Events are usually cancelled due to adverse weather conditions or mechanical failure. Anyway, there were several frantic 'phone calls and emails and we decided to go ahead with a changed programme. So, we met in Anstey's Cove on Friday afternoon to start the weekend's programme.



Figure 1: Westerlys anchored in Anstey's Cove

Anstey's Cove is a delightful spot to anchor with plenty of space and good shelter from the west. The boats at this stage were: - Sea Daisy, Sangelai, Saracen, Hecate, Thalmia, and Firebird of Fingest. In the afternoon, three crews went ashore to buy an ice cream from the beach café but were delighted to find it also stocked a selection of local draught ales! A few of us met on Saracen for pre-dinner drinks and nibbles on what was a pleasant warm summer's evening. By dusk, there were another seven boats at anchor, in addition to our

group. I do wonder if there is a trend to anchoring rather than spending on harbour or marina fees.

One of the drawbacks of anti-cyclonic conditions is that, invariably, easterly winds can develop. On our part of the South Devon coast, easterlies can be problematic. By morning that is what happened; a light north-easterly breeze was blowing along with a slight chop. The original plan was to go for a short sail out into Lyme Bay before moving into Babbacombe. By the time we had weighed anchor – around 09.30 - the wind had died completely so it was just a simple matter of motoring to Babbacombe Bay.

Saturday, 9th July was a very hot, sunny day and the beach became packed. We were joined by another booked Westerly, Teresa, and April Lady which was on passage from Normandy to Belfast. By afternoon, the Bay had become quite full of other anchored vessels in addition to our group – see photo with Sea Daisy and Firebird of Fingest in the bottom right. There was a good representation of Westerly yachts ranging in size from a 21' Warwick to a 35' Riviera.



Figure 2: Looking down on the Westerlys anchored in Babbacombe Bay

During the afternoon most went ashore. Bob Walker's family came up for the day from Plymouth by wheels. Lizzie Box had a "taster" dinghy session which she found most enjoyable as she had not sailed in a small boat since being in an Optimist as a youngster. My six-year-old granddaughter "Bella" thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to wash down the sailing club's dinghies although she managed to soak her father, the BCSC instructors and some members of the public which she thought was hilarious. I should also add that it was rather amusing when a rather large seal decided to swim close to the shore and swimmers ran from the sea screaming, a bit like a scene from "Jaws" but our Bella was not in the slightest bit phased by it.

As the evening was fine, still and warm, we arranged an impromptu promenade party which is a first for me. I have attended lots of pontoon parties and the odd cabin party in bad weather but not a promenade party. All worked out well with evening meals back on board. Quite a diversion from the original planned activities.



Figure 3: Approaching Sunset in Babbacombe Bay

Unfortunately, by morning, the north-east wind had come up again, along with an irritating swell. This made life aboard quite uncomfortable and as a result all had departed by breakfast time. Despite the early departure, a great weekend was had by all, thus emphasising the point that there are some very attractive anchorages around the coast which are well worth exploring.

Finally, as a matter of interest, on the Sunday afternoon and after our departure, a scrub fire developed at the northern end of the bay which cut off the footpath access to Petitor Beach from the headland. A number of persons had to be evacuated by the Torbay all-weather lifeboat, along with some assistance from the Teignmouth Lifeboat. Quite a bit of activity which we all missed.