

Segas East Coast Cruise 2020

Little Ships' Report

Friday, 14 August 2020

Moyana, Mystique and Sirius left Gillingham Dock ('the Creek') at 0900 hours around local High Water bound for the Crouch/Roach at the start of the East Coast Cruise.

Moyana decided to press on with a fair westerly breeze and following tide, and made good progress motor-sailing with full genoa and no main. Mystique and Sirius preferred a purer, more leisurely approach under sail only and soon fell astern.

Moyana carried sail as far as the Maplin buoy, a distance of 20.6 nm, arriving at about 1245 hours for an average speed over the ground of 5.5 knots. The wind then fell light and came ahead of the course for the next leg, 8 nm at 032°T, so the genoa was rolled away and, under engine only, speed dropped to an average of 4.5 knots, arriving at the Whitaker Spit around 1430 hours, half an hour before local Low Water.

The tide soon turned in favour of the course up the Whitaker Channel, and with easy conditions speed picked up slightly to 5 knots, so that the 10 nm to the entrance to the Roach was covered in 2 hours, arriving at the Branklet buoy at around 1630 hours. A further 30 minutes at the same speed up the Roach saw Moyana lying quietly to her anchor in the secluded Yokesfleet anchorage shortly after 1700 hours. The total distance of 41 nm was covered in just 8 hours.

Meanwhile Mystique and Sirius had maintained their stately progress, sailing in close company as far as the entrance to the Roach when their ways divided.

Sirius carried on for Burnham Yacht Haven, and Mystique navigated the lower Roach arriving in the Yokesfleet around 1730 hours to drop anchor close astern of Moyana, where they both passed a pleasant and peaceful night.



Saturday, 15 August 2020

The next morning was not quite so pleasant, but shortly after 0745 hours both *Mystique* and *Moyana* upped anchor and set out for Fambridge Yacht Haven. The flooding tide was contrary for the 2.5 nm passage down the Roach so average speed was only 3 knots or less, but once in the Crouch the tide was fair for the remaining 9 nm of the passage. Unfortunately the weather was not quite so fair, with a heading westerly wind, steady drenching rain, and poor visibility. After a thoroughly miserable journey *Moyana* reached her allocated berth in Fambridge Yacht Haven (notified in advance by the Cruising Fleet Captain, for which many thanks) in calm conditions as the weather started to improve at 1040 hours, 20 minutes after local High Water. *Mystique* arrived 20 minutes later, and, an hour or so after that, shore support arrived in the person of *Moyana*'s first mate. Most of the rest of the day was spent drying out, cleaning up and tidying around. In the late afternoon the main fleet arrived to join us, apart from *Sirius* who had elected to stay in Burnham. Followed by a quiet evening with sundowners, and a restful night.



Sunday, 16 August 2020

Rest and recreation day, with afternoon/early evening birthday party complete with balloons, cake and jelly, apart from the jelly!

Monday, 17 August 2020

The fleet went its various ways to make for Burnham Yacht Harbour, some via Battlesbridge (?), but Moyana took the direct route, again motor sailing with full genoa, her preferred configuration with a following/quartering wind, leaving Fambridge shortly after 1030 hours (2 hours before local High Water) aiming to stem the last of the flood and arrive at Burnham shortly after 12 noon, when the weather was forecast to turn wet and thundery. All went to plan at first



with a reaching wind from the south, but the wheel started to come off just before entering Burnham when the wind began to pipe up, still from the south. Moyana approached her allotted berth (thanks again to the Cruiser Fleet Captain for pre-arranging) but was unable to claw her way onto the windward pontoon, so slid less than gracefully onto the (thankfully vacant) leeward pontoon. Shore support arrived shortly afterwards, and Moyana was warped in to her authorised windward berth without much more fuss.

The wind was still strong from the south, and direct into the harbour entrance, when the rest of the fleet arrived. Much intervention and muscle power from by-standing dockers, acting as temporary mid-wives so to speak, was required in some cases to ensure satisfactory berthing. But in the end all were safely secured in their proper positions, and the whole fleet, including Sirius, were finally all in it together.

Tuesday, 18 August 2020 to Saturday, 22 August 2020

We remained 'in it' for the next five days, apart from the intrepid Moonfleet and Serenity who took off on the Thursday to go to Bradwell in temporarily benign conditions. Serenity got back to Burnham very late on Saturday evening, but Moonfleet never did make it back, preferring to anchor over Saturday night in the Brankfleet Creek at the entrance to the Roach. In the meantime the bulk of the fleet spent the days idling, swanning off and making sure their mooring lines were secure.

Sunday, 23 August 2020

The majority of the fleet, the 'big ships', had decided to return to the Medway via the Whitaker Channel and the Swin, and left Burnham at 0600 hours to get

the best out of the tides. The little ships however, which now included Bonnes Fortunes as well as *Moyana*, *Mystique* and *Sirius*, had thought the forecast wind would be too much for them on the round Foulness route, and during the course of the morning debated how and when they would return to the Medway. In the end *Moyana* and *Mystique* decided to go that day by the Havengore route, but *Bonnes Fortunes*, not wishing to get stuck on the Maplin Sands, opted to try the longer route the following day, and *Sirius*, who had obviously grown very attached to Burnham, wanted to wait a few more days in hope of lighter weather.

After *Mystique* had verified with the bridge keeper that the Havengore Bridge was operational, arrangements were made for the crew of *Mystique* to return home with shore support, which departed at 1200 hours.

The two remaining little ships slipped their moorings at 1300 hours, and made their way out of the Crouch against the flood but with westerly wind, and then into the Roach, but now with the flooding tide assisting.

They arrived at the Havengore Bridge around 1500 hours, 1 hour 20 minutes before HW Southend, but by now the flood tide from the estuary was making into Havengore Creek and was therefore contrary to the outward course. Even so good progress was possible at 3 knots or so, and the picture below taken from *Moyana* shows *Mystique* due astern near the outermost metal post, with two other vessels, apparently quite deep draft, making their way inward. The bridge can just (with magnification) be made out to the left of the backstay.



Progress continued to be good at up to 4 knots, until arrival in the deep water of the estuary itself, when we lost the lee of Shoeburyness and the tide turned. The 4.4 nm from bridge to Shoebury beacon had taken 1 hour 15 minutes, but with the ebb tide starting to run hard, and the wind backing into the southwest and freshening, the next 4.8 nm to the mouth of the Medway took a further 1 hour 45 minutes for *Moyana*, arriving at the Grain Hard buoy at 1800 hours, and

quite a bit more for *Mystique*, who was surely hampered by a none-too-clean hull. The entrance past Garrison Point was not very pleasant with a very fresh wind dead on the nose, and the tide running out like a storm drain in full spate. Ground speed got down to 1.5 knots or less, so *Moyana* decided it would take too long to go all the way back to Gillingham that night, and decided to make for the Sharfleet Creek anchorage. These 3.3 nm from Garrison took almost an hour and a half, and the skipper spent a challenging few minutes trying to get the anchor to hold in winds of 20+ knots. He made it at last, not far from where *Spice Cat* was already anchored, but he had mis-judged his position in the anchorage, and an hour later *Moyana*, who obviously had had quite enough for one day, decided to lie down and rest for five hours in the welcoming, soft Sharfleet mud. Skipper also retired for the night. *Mystique*, being made of sterner stuff, gave up on the Sharfleet idea and powered on far into the night to arrive in pitch darkness in Gillingham Reach. Unable to see a buoy to secure to, he came to rest alongside *Beluga* at 2230 hours.

Monday, 24 August 2020

Moyana upped a very muddy anchor shortly after 0500 hours (still dark!), near local High Water, and made her way in the darkness against an ebbing tide through the back door of the Sharfleet into Half Acre Creek, and onward in gathering light through the Long and Pinup Reaches into Gillingham Reach. She finally reached her home berth in Gillingham Dock at 0645 hours with barely enough time to make fast and stow for harbour before the water ran out at 0715 hours. *Mystique* had made her way into the dock some time before and was already settled. Both skippers retired to their bunks for a short rest to recover nerve and sanity.

Three hours later the skipper of *Mystique* left to start his car journey home, and shore support arrived to convey the skipper of *Moyana* on his onward journey.

Later in the day *Bonnes Fortunes* made it back to Gillingham after a fairly comfortable and uneventful passage (unless her skipper advises otherwise).

Friday, 28 August 2020

The laggard *Sirius* also finally made it back to Gillingham, with heroic assistance from the skipper of *Mystique* (glutton for punishment?), taking the long road home, and arriving just before sundown.

Very well done, everybody. We'll do it all again some time, but not just yet!!