

Llamedos – Our first boat !

We never set out to buy a boat, well not one the size of Llamedos. On that day our intention was to drive down to Chichester and the Witterings as we were thinking of buying a small property which we could use at the weekends. We could then have a small boat to go out fishing etc.

We noticed the entrance to Chichester Marina and a thought crossed our minds. What if we bought a boat which was big enough to sleep on overnight ? Then we wouldn't need to buy a property thus killing two birds with one stone !

We went into the brokerage office and explained our requirement and budget. The first boat they showed us was a bit shabby and smelled of damp and petrol. We had no experience of buying or owning boats, but this did not feel right. We viewed a few boats and then they showed us Llamedos. This was about the right size, was clean and tidy, did not smell of petrol and felt right.

Then followed our initiation into the boat buying process. You do not need a licence, qualification or experience to take a boat to sea. You do need insurance to keep a boat in the marina, at least third party to financially protect other boats in case of accident. The only licence you need is for use of a VHF Radio which requires training and a certificate of competence. It is advisable to have the boat surveyed primarily to ensure that the hull is sound and the engine works.

You agree a price and you then have a contract subject to Survey and Sea Trial. Within a couple of weeks you can be the proud owner of a boat and head out to sea.

And that is exactly what we did !

Chichester Marina

Chichester Marina is situated in a large conservation area known as Chichester Harbour. We were fortunate to be able to secure the berth along with Llamedos. The former owners bought a sail boat which they kept on the same pontoon. This was quite handy for any follow-up information and advice. It was also a sign that they were not trying to hide anything.

We spent many comfortable nights on board listening to the clinking of the sail boat rigging against the masts.

Entrance to the marina is through a sea lock which would operate at times of low tide in the harbour. At times of higher tide they would leave the lock open and the flow in and out was controlled by traffic lights – this was known as Free-Flow. When the lock was in operation, you had to call up for a slot. At peak times, this could mean being on a list of 20+ boats and it could take 45 minutes to get out.

Coming back in could mean waiting in a queue out in the approach for 20 minutes and it could be a bit precarious trying to hold your position in windy conditions. This was one feature we did not miss when we later moved Llamedos up to the Thames.

The marina has excellent facilities – toilets, showers, chandlery, boat engineers and a great restaurant/bar - we were very happy there.



Chichester Harbour

Chichester Harbour is a large conversation area with much wildlife. The journey from the marina entrance to Chichester Bar (where the harbour area meets the Solent) is five miles. At a maximum speed of 5 knots, this means it takes an hour to complete the trip, sometimes longer depending on how many recreational dinghy sailors you have to navigate around.

Although that part was an inconvenience, especially as time out boating was limited by tides, the harbour did provide an area for boating when the weather was too inclement for venturing out into the rough seas of the Solent.

Also situated in the harbour was an area known as East Head. This is a sandy outcrop near West Wittering where many boats would anchor and picnic on sunny summer days.



Afghans

Jenni and Kev were down one weekend.
We were enjoying afternoon drinks talking
about our neighbours on the pontoon.

Fee then mentioned that she'd spotted an
Afghan on a boat three away from us.

Jenni has a look of horror on her face
"What? A terrorist?"

Er no Jenni - a dog!



Easter, only just

One Easter we were planning a trip to the Isle of Wight to see the family. The boat was back in the water after the winter and the engines had just been serviced. The weekend before we went down to make sure everything was in good working order.

We went through the lock and were five minutes out into the harbour when we noticed a funny smell. The temperature gauge for one of the engines was showing high. We looked behind and smoke was coming out the back!

Graham shut down that engine and we turned around to head back to the marina. This was tricky because the power steering on such a boat is governed by one of the engines – the engine that was not working.

We managed to limp back on one engine and moored up to the jetty outside the lock. An engineer was called and discovered that a connector which allows the water to circulate and cool the engine had worked loose thus causing the overheating.

We had probably been seconds away from an engine fire – not good, especially on a boat full of petrol! At least it was sorted before Easter the following weekend.



The Solent

On another venture to the Isle of Wight to see family, we approached Bembridge only to discover that there was nowhere to moor up. We ended up having to return to Chichester very disappointed.

The next day we bought a Dinghy and an Outboard so that in future we could at least anchor and get ashore.



One time we were off Ryde and decided to stop for a bit of lunch and some fishing.

We duly dropped anchor and settled down for a bit of relaxation. Fee took the opportunity to study the sea chart.

It was then that she discovered we were anchored where we should not be. There was an underground cable directly below us.

Needless to say, we were extra careful as we raised the anchor and moved off sheepishly.



Engine Failure

During one Winter when we did not take the boat out of the water, one of the engines seized up and would not start at all. A change of spark plugs and batteries did not help.

Mr Doyle came to the rescue.

One evening, a colleague engine mechanic more used to working on Formula One cars was despatched to Chichester. In the space of an hour or so he had completely stripped down, cleaned and rebuilt both starters and alternators. Something we were extremely grateful for.

Fishing on Llamedos

One of our last trips was a fishing expedition. After spending two hours going up and down the Solent without even the usual dogfish, we finally hit on a shoal just before going back over Chichester Bar.

We must have caught twelve or more fair sized mackerel in the space of a few minutes.

That gave us something to eat for a few days !



Time to move Llamedos

After many enjoyable adventures on Llamedos around the Solent, we decided that we weren't getting as much use as we had hoped. It was taking an hour and a half each way to drive between Weybridge and Chichester. This was before the Hindhead Tunnel was built.

So we made the decision to have Llamedos transported up the Thames and moored at Shepperton Marina.

All boats have to be registered on the Thames and each boat must have a unique name.

There was already a Llamedos registered so it was

Goodbye Llamedos

and

Hello Ice Penguin