

Blue Bottle a-Broad

Having recently returned to my roots in Lymington it was natural that Susan and I would acquire a dinghy. The Lymington River Scow was an easy choice to make. Blue Bottle L^R 508 has been a delight from day one. Early forays to get the feel of the boat, and for Susan to get the feel of Lymington River and The Solent; a couple Wednesday evening races, returning satisfying third places in each race; the opportunity to show our eldest grandson the delights and challenges of sailing in open waters (rather than a gravel pit): what more can one want from life.

While we are yet to rise to the top of the waiting list for Dinghy Park space she is easy to trail from home and rig whenever we want to sail. Now, if one can trail from home to the slipway then surely greater distances are possible? And so with an invitation to join family for a few days on the Norfolk Broads, Blue Bottle was eager for new adventures.



Trailing to Norfolk was easy. Once there our base was to be at a river-side chalet east of Potter Heigham Bridge. With a Broads Short Visit Permit in place before we arrived and permission, for a small fee, to use the slipway at Martham Boats we were all set. Even as we launched there were admiring glances and comments from the boatyard staff and other visitors. Some even recognised the L^R Scow class.

With only a short week in Norfolk, and other activities to fit in, one could not sail all the time. Nonetheless, I achieved a solo sail from the chalet up the River Thurne to Candle Dyke, through Duck Broad and Heigham Sound, and into Hickling Broad. Initially reefed, I found that the fickleness of the winds; as they crept over and around reeds, trees and buildings; meant that I was losing more from the loss of sail height than I was gaining from loss of sail area. Fortunately, shaking out the reef is simple enough while hove to.

On a second sail with Susan we intended to investigate Martham Broad. However, as we were running down from the River Thurne, passing

Dungeons Corner, we realised that the delights of Martham Broad may be outweighed by the effort of beating out. In the end we drew stumps and commissioned the oars and rowlocks, rowing until we reached more favourable, though always fickle, winds.

Sailing on the Broads is so very different from The Solent. The wind direction at water level, as indicated by any wavelets, can be (usually is) very different to the wind direction above reed height. Any trees on the bankside will make the wind curl in every direction, or none. Reeds on the leeward side of a cut can bounce the wind back. On one occasion I was preparing for a gybe and thought to check my wind vane. No help at all. My Little Hawk Wind Indicator was doing its best to perform like a helicopter rotor blade, spinning manically!

But all good times must come to an end and on our last day Susan sailed solo back to Martham Boats. The recovery, stow and lash for the journey took no time at all. But enough time for more admiring glances and comments. The Scow's gaff rig and pretty lines make her a perfect compliment to the traditional Broads yachts.

We will most assuredly be returning to the Broads one day. Also, inspired by the ease of trailing, we look forward to Scowing in other waters too.

David Linsell

L^R 508 Blue Botle

30 August 2021