**15.5.24 First sail of the season.**

**Gillingham to Gillingham via Long Reach 5.7Nm.**

Shakedown outing to test systems, human and physical/mechanical. All well. Lovely evening sail, goose winging gently up the Medway. Good enough to remember why I spent so long scraping and painting.

**20.5.24**

**Gillingham to Sharfleet. 1500-1730. Easterly 10-15 kn. Sunny. 9Nm.**

Leaving a very quiet marina and lock on a Monday afternoon, and heading out into the easterly breeze, on the nose of course, so motor sailing much of the way down the Medway. I find at about 1100rpm the engine is comfortable and with mainsail gives us 3.5-4.0kn across the water into wind which with the outgoing tide produces a healthy 4.5-5.0kn over the ground. (Hurrah the new electromagnetic log is working - no more paddle wheels for me!). I could have sailed, tacking all the way down but a little lazy today and space in the estuary is constrained as the tide gets low. I finally get to turn the engine off sail as we round the Stangate Spit cardinal mark and have a delicious beam reach sail all the way up and back down Stangate Creek. Sailing in 10kn of wind in flat water and sunshine is a great pleasure and all I needed to shake off worldly thoughts. The boat is sailing well with its newly clean hull and wants to keep sailing. If it wasn’t for the wind direction I could have gone on out to sea. Next time.

**At anchor that evening**

In the distance in one direction the Chinese looking Sheppey Road Bridge with tiny trucks crawling across it. In another direction the wooded chalk hills rise away southward. In the middle distance five seals (I think one is a pup) lie on the foreshore presumably aware that the tide will soon rise to float them off for some leisurely fishing. The seals’ coats are surprisingly red at this time of year. Behind me and over the marsh is the mighty (and slightly oddly named given its location in the Medway) London Thamesport container port, silent this evening - do they get many ships these days?

This is Sharfleet Creek which for some reason I have not anchored in before. It’s peaceful and further away from dry land than most Medway anchorages. I’ve arrived at low water, which is useful for prospecting shallows, so hopefully I won’t ground in the night as long as the anchor holds which I think it will in this mud. There’s no one else here at all. Brilliant for now, but I wonder whether that will last.

A big evening sky and lowering sun suggests we might get a good sunset and perhaps a sunrise too if I’m lucky. Black and white liveried Brent geese talk busily as they fly over.

Later: The sun has just dropped out from under a cloud, now hovering between the ragged base of the cloud and the horizon. A great orange globe, full of menace and yet perhaps promise - the source of everything. No wonder the Egyptians and the Incas worshiped it. The vast oval disk is touching the distant trees now and has turned blood orange. Much of the rest of the view is purple grey, an exquisite and slightly painful colour scheme. Now it is half a sun with tiny details of the horizon picked out against its bright orange surface, pylons, wires, trees. The sky round the sun is turning purple, about to take over from the sun itself as the source of light, which is rapidly dipping away and just a crescent of orange now dwindling as I write this to a sliver… and disappearing. The sky above it is now doing all the work giving us the colours of sunset, more subtle and definitely less menacing than the sun itself. Everything recedes to pink greys and the evening closes in.

**21.5.24 Return journey**

**Wind N 5-8kn. Cloudy and wet**

A calm but dull start to the day. Our night anchored in Sharfleet was a great success. Snow Gosse was the only boat there and lots of bird life with a group of seals a little way off to the west. As always on a new anchorage I am a bit cautious about holding and direction of pull. Using the excellent anchor alarm on Savvy Navvy helps. This part of Sharfleet Creek is shaped like a big eddy but here in the north eastern corner, the tide flows as expected. All well then. A lovely spot.

The trip back started on motor but once round the spit buoy and out in Saltpan Reach I sailed all the way up to Gillingham, close hauled in heavy rain and light wind. Good practice and with the tide keeping us at around 4-5kn over the ground. Silvery light and continuous downpour very atmospheric and good for testing my ‘restored’ Musto waterproof which proved useless - for sailing anyway. Time to face an expensive purchase!

The boat, sails, engine and instruments are all behaving well although the wind direction instrument is out of alignment – one for the to do list.