



*Douglas at the helm on Joe Munn's cruiser Duressa*  
Photo by Alan Jones



# molliette

The annual journal of the WEST MERSEA YACHT CLUB Founded 1899

West Mersea Yacht Club, 116 Coast Road, West Mersea, Essex CO5 8PB  
tel: (01206) 382947 (office) (01206) 384463 (restaurant) fax: (01206) 386261  
email: [info@wmyc.org.uk](mailto:info@wmyc.org.uk) website: [www.wmyc.org.uk](http://www.wmyc.org.uk)  
launchman mobile phone: 07752 309435

Designed by: DBA Graphic Design Limited Tel: 01206 804890 email: [dbagraphics@googlemail.com](mailto:dbagraphics@googlemail.com)

Printed by Printwize Witham

December 2013



# Contents

1	From the Commodore	<i>...now moving from log to plastic</i>
2	Round Britain row	<i>...a story of grit, determination and success</i>
8	Colette in the Baltic	<i>...lovely cruising area but a long way to go</i>
12	Tectonic coincidences	<i>...famous member who proved the earth moved</i>
13	Lifeboat	<i>...a 50 year history of saving lives from Mersea</i>
16	What a summer!	<i>...23 knots under sail, and that's only the start</i>
19	Cruiser racing round-up	<i>...points mean prizes</i>
23	Moorings & boatyard	<i>...unseen work keeps the buoys afloat</i>
24	Spitzbergen revisited	<i>...having cheated death once he tries again</i>
28	Club cruises	<i>...sociability, navigability and flexibility</i>
33	Ted Hood	<i>...recollections of a famous sailmaker</i>
34	Cadet week	<i>...from small beginnings champions grow</i>
36	A to Z in the Atlantic	<i>...a convenient stop-off in mid ocean</i>
39	Congratulations Dr Clark	<i>...Saskia wins more recognition</i>
40	Holland ... which way?	<i>...a first timer's account and lessons learnt</i>
46	Suggestions	<i>...now there's an idea ...</i>
48	House notes	<i>...a good team delivers well</i>
50	Life aboard the Committee Boat	<i>...an affectionate study of our men in action</i>
51	New members	<i>...a warm welcome</i>
51	In memoriam	<i>...friends remembered</i>
52	Sailing honours	<i>...who bagged the prizes this year?</i>
53	Committee members	<i>...who do I speak to?</i>



Cadet Week prizegiving

Photo by Brian Morgan

# Editorial

Well, you won't lack for variety in this year's edition. If rowing round Britain is not quite your thing there are several exotic cruises to choose from, whether it's to the Azores, the Baltic or the Barents Sea. We even learn how the earth moved for a previous member. On a more modest scale we have the confessions of a North Sea virgin, and yet closer to home a round-up of club racing, cadet racing and of course club cruises. Thank you all for your contributions to a vibrant and successful club.

For next year please send your contributions via the Club Office or direct to [campbellhome@aspects.net](mailto:campbellhome@aspects.net). Ideally send text in MS Word, either as an e-mail attachment or on a CD. Pictures, with suggested captions to identify persons/boats/places, are best as JPEG files, highest resolution possible but not embedded in Word files and, for large numbers, on a CD.

If you can send me anything before mid September you'll deserve a prize.

**COLIN CAMPBELL**  
Editor



Cover photo: Cloud Walker in Magdalenefjorden, Svalbad  
Photo by Christopher Hamblin

# Committee Members

To help members raise concerns with the appropriate persons WMYC Committee Members (until the AGM in January 2014) are listed below:

<b>Commodore:</b>	Alan Jones
<b>Sailing:</b>	Ed Allan (Vice-Commodore), Julian Lord (Hon Sailing Secretary), Melvyn Daniels (Cruising representative), Hector Heathcote, Sally-Anne Turnbull, Philip Woods, Brian Bolton (Seconded EAORA representative) Greg Dunn (Seconded MW Chairman), Paul Gosling (Seconded DSC representative)
<b>House:</b>	Michael Wheeler (Rear Commodore), Ian Brown, John Clifton, Cathy Roberts, Andrew Williamson
<b>Moorings &amp; Boatyard:</b>	Bob Thomas (Rear Commodore), Richard Taylor (BaCASA/Mersea Haven rep), Stephen Dines, Dave Lewis, Tim Wood (Seconded - Mersea Haven Chairman)
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Ian Shay



# From the Commodore



Welcome to the 2013 edition of the West Mersea Yacht Club's annual journal, the Molliette.

Thank you to our Sailing Committee under the chairmanship of Ed Allen, Vice Commodore for a full-on racing and cruising programme, greatly assisted by the benign summer weather of course. Once again the white sail fleet has proved a popular addition to our IRC/local handicap fleet with 20 boats taking part in the series.

Our House Committee has shown that a prudent pricing policy, calendar of events and attention to the fabric of the club-house can all achieve keeping everything ashore 'shipshape'. Foremost in the latter have been Michael Wheeler, Rear Commodore, Ian (bean-counter) Shay and of course our relatively new General Manager Jo Steadman.

Bob Thomas, Rear Commodore ably assisted by his Mooring and Boatyard team have enjoyed a successful year 'stoking the engines' of the club. How many of you noticed a gap in

launch service when one of our launches suffered gearbox failure mid-season? Not many I would guess as the lift-out, re-fit and re-launch was achieved in three days - an excellent response to an unforeseen failure. Working in this team has been Tim Wood whose long hours and diligence attending to the affairs of Mersea Haven have seen the integrity of Mersea Haven maintained for the future.

Closely intertwined with our Committees are, of course, our professional staff who are all deserving of our gratitude and praise. They have been led this year by Jo Steadman, General Manager whose learning curve since joining us in March has been very steep, but very deftly surmounted.

Both Mersea Week and Cadet Week Committees, chaired by Greg Dunn and Will Crossley respectively, worked hard and produced programmes that were thoroughly enjoyed by all participants. Both events, which are run on behalf of WMYC and the Dabchicks, rely on numerous volunteers including start crews, support boats and shore teams and let us all applaud every one of them.

A highlight of this year was the record-breaking rowing circumnavigation of England, Scotland and Wales by our local lads, Josh Taylor and Alan Morgan, together with their friends James Plumley and Gavin Sheehan. Not sailing, but a tremendous feat of navigation and willpower, and I was very proud on behalf of our members to award Alan and Josh Honorary memberships of the Club.

The Club's activities have raised generous donations towards local charities over the past year. The Packing Shed Regatta and Summer Party raised £770, the Macmillan coffee morning £774 and the RNLI pursuit race £730. Thank you all, on behalf of these charities, for your support.

As the nights grow longer and the boats come ashore the Club becomes a welcoming haven, especially on Friday carvery nights. Thoughts will soon turn to next year's sailing and that rubbing down, painting and varnishing. No – ho, not for me, I have moved from log to plastic! Farewell *Peacock*, hello *Raggerty*.

I wish everyone a pleasant read and again, thank you Colin.

**ALAN JONES**  
Commodore

# Round Britain Row

The alarm went off at 0530 June 1st 2013. It's race day and the Islanders Team was ready: James Plumley from Guernsey, Gavin Sheehan from Ireland, and Alan Morgan and Josh Taylor from Mersea. We enjoy a final shower and a last look in the mirror before packing our single personal lightweight dry bags with only the essentials to last us the next month. After a few goodbyes we leave our hotel and head down to our home for the next month, the *Black Oyster*.

It was hard to believe four months of preparations had finally come to a close. The team came together through rowing at university; Josh and James joined forces in the Plymouth University Rowing Club, whilst Gavin and Alan met in the University of the West of England's Club. Prior to this

Mersea boys Josh and Alan shared a history of sailing together throughout their years in the cadet fleet.

When James spotted the GBRow Challenge in December 2012, we all agreed this was something that could be done. Confident in our abilities as a team we worked out that it would be technically possible to break the record, weather permitting. In March 2013 we finally had the means to enter the race and buy a second-hand boat; this was done with a great deal of community belief and support, mostly from Mersea Homes, Plymouth University, InTechnology, Care Group, J Gosling Insurance Brokers, Van Cols Photographers, Essex Helicopters, Otter Box and Expedition Foods... and perhaps most of all from our families.

But now the preparation stage was over, this was it. With everything loaded and packed safely aboard our 24ft long, 6ft wide ocean rowing boat moored alongside *HMS President* we were ready to go. After breakfast and saying our final farewells we left dock and rowed out to the start line under Tower Bridge. When we lined up it was more like Formula One and nothing like the start of a sailing race. We were paraded to the start behind *Gloriana*, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Rowing vessel. Prior to the race we were told we wouldn't be allowed to pass her until the first corner on the river, they said, "It would be impossible to do so even if we tried as there are 18 Royal Navy Cadets on the oars and an engine running". However, as soon as the gun went and the clock started there was nothing that was going to

*Race prep, working over winter in the barn*



stop the four of us from leaving the *Gloriana* behind. Our mission was to get ahead and stay ahead, just like any rowing race we knew and every second would count if the record were to be broken.

Our first test was to make the best use of the fast current and navigate our way down the Thames before crossing the Goodwin Sands at night. During our race preparation we had a 'crash' course in navigation, focusing on iPad technology and programmes such as Navionics and iNaX. The combination of these programmes alongside tidal flow data and paper charts enabled us to plot and stick to the best course.

Soon into the race we became aware of the impact of the stodgy 800 calorie dehydrated food packets we were going to have to ingest every two hours. We knew that food equalled energy, energy equalled speed and the best chance of winning the race, but it was sometimes difficult to eat.

The morning of Race Day 2 revealed one of the highlights of the whole trip: witnessing a sunrise at sea. It was both beautiful and mind focussing as we had entered into the path of the ferries coming into and out of Dover. A quick VHF call was made to Dover Port Authority to inform them of our position and route. However, it was still our decision to pass ahead or wait for the fast moving ferries. We passed ahead... just. This decision was not uncommon throughout the rest of the trip as every minute counted if we were to beat the record. Even with AIS (Automatic Identification System) we weren't big enough or fast enough to take on the floating 'tower blocks' that passed through the busy shipping lanes



*Irish Sea, just another mild day*

around the UK, but we had to press on as fast as we could.

The Yellow Brick Tracker beacon enabled us to see the position of other boats in our race, which was very helpful to us. The initial good weather conditions and the tracker allowed us to both chase the record time and cover the movements of the teams behind. By the time we reached Lands End we were ahead of the record pace and we had made the first of many tidal gates. This put us in front of the second crew *Team Hallin*, not only a considerable distance ahead of them but also the rest

of the fleet. If we couldn't beat the record we still wanted to win.

Then, after getting the all clear from our meteorologist support to go straight up into the middle of the Celtic Sea we ran into our first taste of foul weather. Unexpected strong northeast winds and big swells appeared without warning which prevented us from making headway and started to sweep us westwards out into the Atlantic. Not only this but the rough sea triggered an old back injury for Gavin. In deep water we then reverted to using a sea





*Scotland, an average day*

anchor, which worked by resisting the rate of drift caused by the windage on the vessel. For 36 hours we managed roughly to maintain our position and then literally crack Gavin's back into place with medical guidance via the satellite phone. The Padstowe lifeboat, scrambled to rescue *Team Oarsome*, asked if we needed assistance but saying they would not come back. We said no thanks – that was a difficult moment. By then weather had forced four of the other teams to retire. Then the rough sea slowly turned to calm water and we were able to press on.

Stormy conditions picked up again 20 miles south of Belfast. Unable to continue rowing into increasing wind and a heavy sea we decided to launch the sea anchor and lighten the gearing

of the blades, a permanent procedure that required sawing two/three centimetres off the ends of the blade handles. As soon as the blades were ready we pulled in the sea anchor to move with the weather to the safety of Drundrum Bay. Being on the run from bad weather and falling further behind the record pace, we thought things could not get worse. We were wrong. During the turn, with the sea on our beam, the boat pitched hard and snapped a carbon blade like a matchstick. We had to work quickly as a team to regain control of the boat, get out a spare blade and carry on.

Spare equipment was essential, we seemed to carry double of everything: we had two specialist lightweight anchors - the 'storm' (4.2kg) and the

'picnic' (2.2kg) anchor. In the event of one snagging we would be able cut our loss and continue safely, depending on the other. Being lightweight also meant they were easy to lift in rough conditions. These anchors were invaluable because they stopped us from being dragged onto a lee shore: this was a coastal race and we were often close to land.

After a seemingly endless battle up the Celtic Sea and behind the record pace, we finally made it across the North Channel at night towards the Kintyre Peninsula - once again only narrowly avoiding the traffic in the shipping lanes. We were now in Scottish waters.

Local gale warnings were continually coming in over our VHF radio, forcing us into a

decision to either sit and wait for the bad weather to pass or row flat out between safe anchorages. Things went well but as we reached the Gulf of Corryvreckan the gales appeared again. Not wanting to push our luck with the strong tides, whirlpools and infamous tide races we limped into safe anchorage once again.

The weather then allowed us to progress slowly up a long windward leg to Cape Wrath, row across a live firing range and onwards to the long leg home. The race was then characterised by cyclonic weather and dark skies. The most vital piece of equipment on board was the water maker without which we were not able to convert seawater into drinking water - and that needed sunshine. By utilising solar energy from panels on the

roof of the forward and aft cabins we charged two onboard marine batteries. These batteries then supplied all of the boat's electrical systems. Quite simply if we didn't receive adequate sunshine we weren't drinking. One of the worst times was the grey sky leg from John O'Groats to Sunderland, when we were limited to one litre each every 24 hours.

The northern winds were now pushing us closer towards the finish line and starting to build. The steep waves were confirmed by a rather late warning to all shipping. Using the big swell to our advantage we were able to get back in touch with the record pace. At this point we were committed to rowing like mad into the tides and then rowing even harder when the tide turned to make the best use of the free speed

available by surfing the waves. Our strategy allowed us to cover above average distances, but at a cost. After nearly a month at sea, racing as hard as we could, we had given just about everything and we were at a low point because despite our best efforts the record seemed to be slipping from our grasp. Our saving grace came from friends coming to see us off the Essex coast. We felt we were nearly home and just two more days of flat out rowing could still give us the record.

Finally we reached the Thames and anchored off Canvey Island waiting for the tide to turn. After calculating tidal flow, speed, and distance to the finish we realised we could still do it! All we had to do was paddle hard to the line. But that was not to be, a strong head wind had one last challenge for us.



*Dartford Bridge, day of the finish*





As soon as the tide ebbed we set off at full pace. The wind whipped the Thames into a manic choppy state, which meant we had to put every last piece of energy on the blades. But just in time our home support flotilla arrived as we approached the Dartford Bridge; *Phantom*, *Harrison Rib*, *Jackson Rib* and family helped us to dodge oncoming cargo boats and passenger ferries so we could maintain our position in the fast tidal stream. The Port of London Authority was also shouting at us to move over to the starboard channel with just minutes to spare before the tide would turn against us.

We crossed the line with a time of 26 days 9 hours 9 minutes, 12 hours ahead of the record by just one tide. If we had missed any of our tidal gates we would

not have made it. The euphoria of breaking the record was soon overtaken by the amazing welcome we received from so many people. It was certainly good to be back.

A common question we now get asked is, "Would you do it again?" We all agreed we would revisit those places that stuck in our minds - Lands End, Isle of Skye, Mull and even Cape Wrath. But perhaps to sail there next time...

One thing is clear, we wouldn't have made the start of the race without the support from our local communities. The biggest surprise after our return was the enthusiasm from schools. Seeing four hundred children waving from West Mersea beach was a humbling experience, something we'll never forget.

Since then we have done several school presentations and it is an incredible feeling to know we may have helped to inspire some of the next generation. We look forward to seeing the amazing things they will do in the future.

One of the great things about team sports is that you are partly responsible for each team member's success or failure, which makes you push yourself further than you thought possible. As for our future, we all have an idea for new challenges and since the solidarity and trust within the team was the key to success you might be hearing from us again.

**ALAN MORGAN &  
JOSH TAYLOR**





*Prize giving, from left: Gavin, Josh, Alan & James*

*Answering questions at the "Great Hurrah" on Mersea beach*





# Colette in the Baltic



We set off on Saturday 29th June – the day summer started in England. I had been looking at the weather with increasing apprehension as May went on into June with depression after depression sweeping across southern England. I had been planning the trip for some months with crews booked so I could not really be very flexible on dates. I originally hoped Graham Sapsford would do one way and I would do the other and we would both have time in the Baltic. Unfortunately Graham's declining health meant that I had to arrange three separate crews with a couple of us staying on board throughout.

We left on an afternoon tide and took the ebb to the Orwell where we anchored overnight. The next day we pushed on to Lowestoft to refuel and victual up at the 'Nobs and Snobs'. On the Monday we set off for Den Helder, the top left-hand corner of the Netherlands. We left with a gentle south-westerly on our port quarter but, as night came, the wind dropped to nothing then filled-in from the east, more or less on the nose. So the sails didn't come out again until we were about 10-15 miles from our destination.

This proved to be an eventful landfall. We saw a Dutch warship, the *Zeeland*, nearby and heard frequent VHF calls about live-firing practice. A

slight moment of panic set in when we saw a raft, a cable away, with a white board and an orange circle painted on it. "Could it be the target?" the crew asked and we made off as fast as possible. Then as we entered the estuary, I saw some metal tubes sticking out of the water in the fairway. Is it a wreck or some kind of oil rig? No, a few minutes later a submarine surfaced – these tubes were the periscopes. To round it off, as we left the next day via the Molengat, we found ourselves in the middle of a mock amphibious assault on Texel by the Dutch Marines.





We had planned a stop on one of the Dutch Frisian Islands but, with a fair wind, we went on through the night to Nordeney – one of the German islands. Luckily I had Gordon with me who had done most of these ports before and Jim my intrepid sailing friend from Canada. These Frisian Islands are just sand and no more than about 20 feet high, with grass or scrub cover and a few trees. The resident populations are fairly small and they host many summer visitors, both day-trippers and those staying longer. Nordeney is no exception and we had a pleasant visit to the main town where we could enjoy one of the many cafés.



*Nordeney*

Next stop was Helgoland (formerly Heligoland – well known as a shipping forecast area) which, for me, was the highlight of the whole trip. It is a big rock (about one mile by a half) with a nearby sand island, stuck about 20 miles out in the German Bight. The British acquired it in the Napoleonic Wars but in 1890 we swapped it with the Kaiser for Zanzibar. It became a base for German warships so it was extensively bombed in WWII, after which, we moved the population off and used it as a bombing range. In 1952, we handed it back and there is now a small town with very attractive and brightly painted wooden houses, mainly for holiday-makers. It has a large and very well sheltered harbour which is in easy reach of the German coast. Thus it is very popular with yachtsmen and we found ourselves part of a 12 boat raft. Its main attractions, apart from the many bomb craters, are the very clean air, the amazing bird life - so tame that you can practically walk up and touch them – and, of course, the fact that the booze is duty-free.

On 7th June, we left early to take the flood up the Elbe to Brunsbüttele, the western end of the Kiel Canal. The Elbe estuary has sands, shallows and currents that make the Thames look like a picnic. However there is a well marked deep-water

channel that leads up to Hamburg so you have to jostle with container ships and the like as you travel with the currents of up to 7 knots.

The Kiel Canal is about 60 miles long and probably averages about 100 yards wide. It has a lot of commercial traffic and has to be motored. We spent the first night in one of the little box-mooring areas, just off the canal and a second night at the medieval town of Rendsburg, the only one on the canal. On the 9th June we found ourselves in the Kiel estuary and made for one of the many marinas, this one having been used for the Olympics in 1936. This estuary is a magnificent sailing area and is, in effect, Germany's Solent.



*Kiel canal*

As we had a few days before our next crew members arrived we made a 30 mile or so crossing to the island of Aero, our first taste of Denmark. This south-western area of the Baltic is a wonderful sailing area. The weather is generally more settled than Britain as it is governed by the stable continental high, and is not subject to Atlantic depressions. The many islands are also mainly sand, separated by quite shallow water. You are spoiled for choice as there are many anchorages and harbours only a few miles apart. The smaller islands are rural with a small population and, usually, a former fishing harbor which has now been given over to yachts. However full they were (and particularly at weekend they were really full), the harbourmaster always seemed to be able to make room for you. The manoeuvring required really sharpened up my boat-handling skills which don't get much practice in West Mersea. You also have to get used to box moorings. The first few times with three on board, I couldn't get it right – by the end we could easily do it two-up.

We had to get back to Kiel to meet my brother Alan, his wife Rosie, and Madeleine who were all supposed to be flying to Hamburg together. We sailed back on a Saturday and the estuary was absolutely filled with sails, every bit as beautiful as





*Svendborg*

the English south coast. On the expected day I got an anguished call saying that Madeleine was not on the plane. A few phone calls established that she was up at her allotment, unconcernedly thinking that she was coming the following day. Luckily a bit of internetting secured her another flight and she did arrive a day later.

My plan was to make a large circular cruise with Copenhagen as the furthest point. As we had two weeks this meant we had to make an average of about 30 miles a day – not too taxing and should leave reasonable time for sight-seeing. We had almost exclusively brisk westerly winds which suited our mainly north/south courses. The only day where we had to make a lot of way westerly, the wind died away completely and we motored that leg. Much of the going was in well marked but very shallow passages between islands. We seemed to sail for hours on end with the depth sounder reading zero – we soon realized that this was because the eel-grass was growing up to the depth of our keel. My brother asked a local yachtsman how he coped with this. He said that he didn't have any problems – he just didn't have a depth sounder!



*Helsingør Castle*

Most days we tried to get into a harbour by about 3 or 4pm, before the crowds and to leave time for sight-seeing and buying food for the following day. After a while we found a better system was to call into a harbour around lunch time when it would be relatively empty, stay for a couple of hours and then leave to anchor for the night. The seabed is sandy but the weed would often mean that it wasn't very good holding. The locals were big on barbequing, and most places had provision for it ashore.

The two weeks passed quickly and we made back to Kiel, stopping at the British Army sailing base. Army breakfasts at 3 Euros were excellent value but we experienced a thunderstorm and squall there with winds up to 45 knots which interrupted our barbeque. Alan, Rosie, Madeleine and Gordon left us there and Jim and I had a couple of days before Ian Low was due to arrive. Thus we made another foray north, our first stop being Schlieffjord: the home of the Angles before they invaded south-east Britain and gave England its name. This time a squall struck while we were at sea. We had seen it coming and had reefed down but the force of it surprised us. The boat was laid flat and the rain was such that it was impossible to see the bow from the cockpit. Luckily it was very short-lived and half an hour later we were drying out in warm sunshine.

When Ian arrived for the hardest part of the trip, we made straight for the canal and motored its length in one day arriving at the western end in the evening. You have to exit at high tide to take the ebb down the Elbe and this, we thought, meant around 2pm the following day. We were conscious that conditions in the German Bight were worsening and discovered that we were permitted to leave in the small hours. Navigating between the commercial traffic and getting into the lock in the dark was challenging but enabled us to get to the mouth of the Elbe by about 6am. However the forecast put out regularly on the VHF indicated that conditions in the Deutsche Bucht (German Bight) were not favorable. Thus we made one of our few weather-enforced stays at Cuxhaven.

After about 48 hours, a weather-window was forecast and we made a dash east around the German Frisian islands getting to Borkum as the winds were rising to gale force. We arrived at low tide and entered what seemed to be the yacht harbour. I wondered where all the pontoons had gone and we soon realized why as we ran aground twice (the only times in the trip) trying to get alongside. There was another harbour with adequate depth but we had to tie up on dilapidated quays that were left there from WWII. I think it was the least attractive of all the places we visited.

We had to pick up Adam Coughlan at Delfzijl – he was coming by ferry to The Hook and train. With gale force winds outside we intended to enter the





*Colette and skipper in Kiel*

Dutch canal system to traverse the northern part of the Netherlands. This is slow progress because of waiting for locks and bridges, so Ian and I entered the canal and picked Adam up at Groningen which saved us a day. Even so it took three days to get to Harlingen, where we had to wait several hours to enter the port area because one of the moveable bridges had broken down. It is a lovely town and we met Tom Cunliffe, the noted yachting journalist, there.

From Harlingen it is about 30 miles across the Waddenzee back to Den Helder. You have to pick

the right state of the tide and keep to the marked gats and it was a miserable day with constant rain and strong winds. At Den Helder we had time to visit the main maritime museum before setting off back across the North Sea. Northwestern winds had been forecast but in fact they turned out to be southwesterly. We started off under sail but, because of wind direction, we ended up tracking down the Dutch coast. By the middle of the night the wind was dying and we found ourselves in heavy commercial traffic about 10 miles offshore from Rotterdam so we decided to cut our losses and motor east, arriving at the Sunk area at first light.

As the day lightened, a nice breeze picked up and we could set sail again and came down the Waddet and into Mersea in some style. That leg was 170 miles and took 30 hours.

The whole trip was about 1700 miles and Jim and I had been away nearly eight weeks. We had a wonderful time and were really lucky with the wind and weather. The Baltic is a lovely cruising area but it is a very long way to go for only about three weeks. Depending on my new boat-partner Ian Low, we might go again one summer, over-winter there and return the following year.

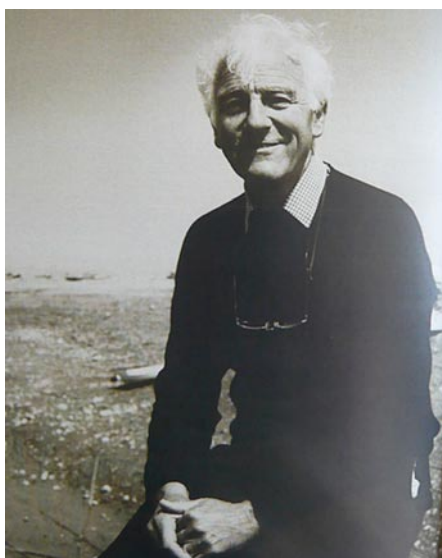
**DAVID EWART-JAMES**  
*Colette*



*Tourist charter boat*



# Tectonic Coincidences



*Drummond Matthews*

On 4th September we were on our way to Cambridge when we heard Dr Roy Livermore, an eminent geologist, on Radio 4. He asserted that the proof published 50 years ago by Dr Drummond Matthews and Fred Vine, of the movement of the earth's tectonic plates, was comparable in its scientific significance with Crick's and Watson's discovery of DNA. Matthews and Vine were able to prove that undersea volcanic eruptions produced rock that then moved across the ocean floor. They achieved this by detecting the sequence of alternating magnetic 'stripes' within the rock caused by the repeated reversal of the North and South magnetic poles. "In short", Dr Livermore said, "plate tectonics explains at a stroke all the important geological phenomena on Earth ... the mechanism that makes this planet unique in the solar system and, ultimately, suitable for life". It would have been worthy of a Nobel prize, had there been an earth sciences category in the Nobel scheme.

The first coincidence was that on that very day we were bound for

lunch in Cambridge with my cousin, Rachel, the erstwhile Mrs Matthews. Drummond (Drum) Matthews, a Cambridge geophysicist and marine geologist, is no longer with us but as the family were members of West Mersea Yacht Club in the 1970's I felt it would be appropriate to record this under-recognised scientific achievement in the Molliette. Drum would certainly have deserved a place in the pantheon of notables in Nick Greville's WMYC Centennial Chronicle.

Rachel, whose early sailing was in Dunlaoghaire, had known the Blackwater from visiting her great uncle (my grandfather) in Tollesbury. Drum came from Porlock, so also had early exposure to the sea and had been in the Navy. As a family the Matthews were cruising people, and because they lived in Cambridge, did not spend much time ashore in Mersea. Their first boat was a family-friendly Fisher 25 *Firiel* (Tolkien) followed by the more adventurous but banally named *Southern Rival*, a 34 which they sailed round from Portsmouth. They cruised the East Coast rivers and Holland and Belgium before family circumstances and Drum's health unfortunately curtailed the association with Mersea, but not with the sea. Drum died back in Somerset in 1997. For a number of years Rachel and her second husband chartered a traditional craft, cruising in the Western Isles of Scotland.

Getting back to the science, the proof, based upon the discovery of magnetic reversal phenomena in the Indian Ocean floor, was strenuously resisted by the *fixed earth* establishment. They were loath to see their comfortable

certainities scuppered; they would surely have found common cause with the *flat earth* people of an earlier age. Now, of course, plate tectonics is accepted mainstream geology.

However marine geology is no armchair science. Drum spent weeks and months away from home on survey vessels and in some very inhospitable sea areas. Data gathering often consisted of setting off explosions and logging the seismic results. In a second coincidence a school friend of mine, who became a marine electronics engineer, was on a survey near Rockall and recalls, "Drum's explosives were responsible for cracking all the portholes on the (chartered) ship when they were detonated too close to the stern. It was lucky the explosives pallet was in the sea and not still on deck!" On the same trip the galley caught fire, the radar scanner burnt out due to an HF aerial wrapped around it, and Drum was badly bruised by a fall from one deck to another owing to a defective rail. The significance of the word "chartered" may be inferred and the writ of *Health and Safety* clearly did not apply.

Although a Nobel prize was not on offer Drum, whose early work was in Antarctica, contributed much to marine geophysics in the course of a distinguished career, achieving widespread recognition at home and abroad. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1974, and in 1982 shared with Fred Vine the Society's prestigious Hughes medal for "an original discovery in the physical sciences".

DAVID McMULLEN  
*Sardana*



# Lifeboat

## The story of the West Mersea inshore lifeboat station

West Mersea Lifeboat Station is 50 years old this year although our rescue service goes back a couple of years before that, as you will read below from extracts of the booklet '5 Minutes to Launch' by Tony Purnell, written in 1979, which details the very beginning.

Way back in 1960/61 Diggle Haward, well-known local yachtsman and former Commodore of the Wivenhoe and the Dabchicks Sailing Clubs, decided that owing to the boating boom and the consequent increasing number of pleasure boats on the Blackwater Estuary, "something should be done about it". In those days the RNLI was doing a great deal of research as regards fast inshore rescue boats, but there seemed very little possibility of getting one here, and Diggle called a meeting of local people with an idea of starting a Mersea Rescue Service. There were several boats involved, among them the Dabchicks Sailing Club Rescue launch and the launch from the West Mersea Yacht Club. There were no radios and for two years the service operated on a very amateur but extremely keen and successful basis in close

liaison with the police, who actually called them out for assistance. In 1962 Diggle Haward on his own initiative approached RNLI HQ with the possibility of having an IRB (Inshore Rescue Boat as they were known in those days). Lt. E. D. Stogdon, MBE RNVR, a member of the HQ Operational and Technical staff of the RNLI brought a demonstration 16ft 'D' type inflatable inshore rescue boat for everybody to have a look at. There was a report back to HQ and Diggle was asked to form a Station Committee for the establishment of an Inshore Rescue Boat Station of the RNLI at West Mersea, which would be operational during daylight hours only and during the summer months from approximately 1st April to 30th October. This was indeed progress and Diggle Haward himself became the first Hon. Sec. of the Station Committee, the Chairman being Mr. B. Rainbird.

As far as records are available, the first volunteer crews were:

A. Clarke, A. Muir, B. Reed, P. Clarke, P. French, P. Mead, J. Clarke, D. Stoker, D. Haward, C. Milgate.



Peter French and Jim Clarke in the first IRB



By kind permission of Clarke & Carter Boatyard, the IRB was kept in the open on a trolley immediately in front of their forecourt, and on the other side of the road. Fortunately, in those days vandalism was not quite the problem that it is now and the boat suffered very little, although I am told that occasionally there was a certain amount of "floppiness" in the inflatable sponsons and a great deal of surplus energy was used on pumping her up. However, the important thing is that the boat was maintained and never was there any question of anything going wrong when she was called for service. Exercises were carried out frequently and the then Hon. Sec. himself volunteered the information that he used to go overboard to "let the boys have some training in picking somebody out of the water". I will not go into the gruesome details but I believe on one occasion, when they yanked Diggle back aboard, very tender parts of his anatomy came into contact with the projections on the side of the IRB and for some time that particular crew were very much out of favour with our Hon. Sec!

The amazing thing is that right from the start, as is customary at most Lifeboat Stations, maroons were used to call out crews for service, and these were fired from West Mersea Yacht Club after notification from the Coastguard that RNLI services were required. But unfortunately, this procedure met with a considerable amount of local opposition because of the noise, although the boat was operational during daylight hours in summer only! All this of course was understandable, but common sense eventually prevailed, especially when it was realised what a tremendous job the IRB crew were doing for a service that existed solely to save lives.

It is hard to realise that in those early days the IRB was not equipped with radio and once the Coastguard called them out, they had no means of communication apart from telephoning (difficult off the Bench Head!). There was at least one occasion when, during a search off Colne Point, Albert Clarke and Peter French, both then crewmen, took the boat ashore and walked up to the telephone booth to enquire from the Coastguard whether or not they should continue a certain search! From the record book, there were obviously occasions when a lot of fruitless time and energy was spent on exhausting searches which resulted in "nothing to report" or called off by the Coastguard because people concerned had eventually got ashore safely. This little IRB was no fun in heavy weather, the crew were very much exposed even though she was restricted to 'summer service' only, and I know that there were

many occasions when she was quietly launched (incidentally without the maroons!) to effect a rescue after dark.

Although the date is not quite certain, after about two years, the Station was re-equipped with a Zodiac inflatable and once again, due to the increase in boating and consequent public interest, the BBC came down and produced a small documentary. What is even more important, our local Council became interested when they realised that the boat and its volunteer crew were an integral part of the emergency services, just as much as the ambulance and fire services.

At this stage Paddy Hare, well-known Managing Director of Gowens sail makers, and local yachtsman, offered the RNLI the use of a shed (formerly used as a store by the Army Sailing Association) as a boathouse. This offer the RNLI gratefully accepted and before they moved in Paddy arranged for the concrete floor to be put in and Vernon Powell, another well known member of the local sailing fraternity, provided the portable ramp to enable the boat trolley to be wheeled out across the road prior to launching. Local teamwork support came to our assistance again and a radio for the Zodiac was provided from a special fundraising project by the Station throughout the area. At this stage it is very important to remember that local financial support and fundraising efforts were steadily increasing, not only for this Station but for the RNLI in its entirety. Although this is mainly an operational history, the boat could not have been in existence without this support.



*Crew and launchers outside the Old Lifeboat Station 1983*

In 1971 - and I am sure this was due not only to the increasing number of services and the excellent service record, but to local pressure as



well - the RNLI decided to station one of the new Atlantic 21 Inshore Lifeboats at West Mersea, on a fully operational basis, i.e. 24 hours call, night and day, summer and winter. This was one of the first three to go on full service, closely followed by one at Southwold. (In fact, our colleagues at Southwold reckon that we pinched their boat, having jumped the gun on the order list!). These early Atlantic 21s were made of plywood, but in 1975 a new fibreglass Atlantic 21 was presented to the station by Alexander Duckham & Co., well-known oil manufacturers, and named the *Alexander Duckham*. In 1967, due to pressure of work, Diggle Haward the Hon. Sec. had to relinquish his position and became Chairman, his post being taken by Lt. Commander Maurice Bond, RNR. When the *Alexander Duckham* was first launched, there was much local press coverage, jollifications, visitations by 'top brass' from the Committee of Management and various 'trips' by august personages, including our local MP.



'*Alexander Duckham*' and crew in 1975

The maroons were still fired at the WMYC and all the deputy Launching Authorities could do this, but as Albert Clarke was almost always at his workshop on the Coast Road immediately adjacent to the Causeway, he seemed to do it about 60% of the time!

By now the number of successful services as compared with the total number of calls, had fully justified the RNLI decision to station the Atlantic 21 here, and in fact we were becoming one of the busiest ILB stations on the East Coast.

In 1987 the *Himley Hall*, also an Atlantic 21, paid for by donations from the Himley Hall Sailing Club and a local subscription, replaced the *Alexander Duckham* and the lifeboat was moved from the old lifeboat station at Stone House to the present boathouse in 1992. The opening ceremony for the

new boathouse was performed by the RNLI President HRH the Duke of Kent, who was then taken to the Yacht Club for lunch.



'*Himley Hall*' on exercise

By the late 1990's the RNLI's fleet of Atlantic 21s was being replaced by the stronger and more capable Atlantic 75, and West Mersea's current lifeboat *Dignity*, an Atlantic 75, was placed on station in 2001. *Dignity* was donated to the RNLI by Dignity Caring Funeral Services. The heavier Atlantic 75 requires a tractor for launch and recovery, and West Mersea is equipped with a waterproofed Ford County tractor capable of wading in water depths of up to two metres. At this time the boathouse was extended to accommodate the tractor and an upstairs operations, training and briefing room was added.

In 2014 we are due to have a new Atlantic 85 class lifeboat for which we are actively fund raising and we have received generous donations from sailing clubs in the area as well as many other organisations. The Atlantic 85 is a little larger than the current boat and will have some extra capability such as radar and VHF radio direction finding. It will also carry four crew instead of the current three and all will be connected via an intercom system to make onboard communication easier.

*Dignity*, along with all other RNLI lifeboats, has recently been equipped with video cameras to record any newsworthy rescues. You may have seen RNLI videos used in TV news items, so watch out for West Mersea videos and hope you are not starring in them!

**MARTIN WADE**  
Lifeboat Operations Manager



# What a Summer!

*With two new yachts for 2013 here is Richard Matthews' round-up of a season's sailing.*

We flew to China in February for the trials of *Oystercatcher XXX*, a 42ft IRC racer deigned by the German firm of Judel Vrolick. The builder Hakes, the same guy who'd built a previous *Oystercatcher* in New Zealand, has now relocated to Xiamen China with Chinese backing. Shipped back to the UK our first weekend off Harwich was a disaster with the rudder snapping. It then transpired the rating was wrong and the Chinese hadn't measured the boat properly anyway. That started a goose chase ending up with us installing a basic interior halfway through the season.

Despite early frustrations the new *Oystercatcher* shows signs of being a real rocket ship. Just take a look at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=uymt4IER190](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uymt4IER190) and bear in mind this isn't the southern ocean, it's off West Mersea and we are doing over 23 knots! Lots of smiling WMYC faces on board! We got better as the season progressed and won a few Sail East races, doing well enough to secure their overall championship for the third consecutive year. Other notables included first overall in the Around the Goodwins and Ramsgate Gold Cup races, and on the EAORA front winning in the Harwich - Ramgate and happily, for the 10th time, an overall win in the Buckley Goblets. Last but by no means least the dear old WMYC Autumn Trophy for the 11th time. No free dinners this time and no Wallet No.4 course, but still a nice way to complete the season.



*Oystercatcher XXX - smokin' upwind*



*Oystercatcher XXX - the day the rudder broke*





*Twilight enters Cala Spalmatore anchorage, La Maddalena Italy*

Our new cruising yacht *Twilight* is a Dubois designed 125 footer built in Turkey. After trials in Istanbul we took delivery in Malta and then on to Porto Cervo, Sardinia to be a camp follower at the Dubois Cup. We berthed alongside a new 175 footer, which turned out to be owned by Snr Berlusconi's lawyer! This was our first real chance to sail the boat which, for a large 200-ton vessel, is well balanced and sails very well indeed. We had one cracking reach with Robbie Lee at the helm doing over 14 knots in 18-20 knots of true wind.

From Sardinia we cruised to Corsica and later cruises have taken us to Croatia, Montenegro, Greece and the Amalfi coast in Italy where John Bolingroke topped our season speed record at 14.7 knots. Greece and Italy were preferred and the least attractive was Croatia where, everywhere we went, the locals wanted to charge us €150-200 a night just for dropping anchor. Cruising on *Twilight* with five crew is very grand but not for us. Although beautiful, she took five years to build and for us a lot of things have changed in that time, not the least of which is a new boat building venture.

*Twilight* is for sale, and until she's sold, after a week at the Monaco Yacht Show, a charter season in the Caribbean beckons.

One highlight of the season was sailing our 12 metre *Crusader* in a match racing series against our near sister *Italia* at the Cowes Classic Week. And closer to home those who run Mersea Week graciously allowed us to join in where we had some of the closest and most enjoyable boat for boat racing for years. We had expected Harold Cudmore to come and demonstrate his prowess as a



world class match racer but he was called away leaving yours truly in at the deep with a crash course in dial-ups and match race starts, luckily without a crash!



*Italia (left) and  
Crusader match  
racing during  
Mersea Week  
Photo by Denette  
Matthews, pilot  
Dominic Fuller*

Our mostly local crew included Club members Pete Besse, John Munns and Hector Heathcote. Jamie Clark, a friend from Cowes who is also an IYRU international judge/umpire, came to run the races and help with on-the-water judging. Despite one boat-for-boat contact, when our bowman decided it was safer to swim than get hit, the racing was fair and friendly, taking place away from the main Mersea Week race fleets.

On the penultimate day *Crusader* was 3-5 down but with a good breeze and three wins on the Friday, in the end the Mersea boat got it 6-5. We may have brought the flavour of past America's Cups to Mersea and certainly enjoyed some very close racing. Special thanks to Greg Dunn Chairman of Mersea Week for his support and to Brian Bolton who helped us plan our courses.

**RICHARD MATTHEWS**



*A tight turn at the NW Knoll and "up chute!"*

*Photo by Denette Matthews, pilot Dominic Fuller*



# Cruiser Racing Round-up

## HOME WATERS IRC RACING

The very cold weather in March and early April hindered fitting out – antifouling in the snow isn't to be recommended – and a lot of boats were still ashore at the beginning of the season. The **Spring Points Series** began on a blustery day with gusts of nearly 30 knots and only five boats competing. The following few weeks saw sunshine, with several starts postponed to allow sea breezes to fill in. These conditions suited Julian Lord's Impala *Scallywag*, which took the **Lewis Powell Cup** and **Cirdan Trophy** races, with *JB's80*, John Bolingbroke's re-named J80, winning the final race for the **Peter Vince Trophy**. *Scallywag* won the series from Geoff Payne's J80 *Surf and Turf* and the Malbec 240 *Evita* of Paul Gosling and Rob Smith.

In the autumn of 2012, the Club's application to host the 2013 **IRC East Coast Championship** had been successful, ahead of applications from Ramsgate's Royal Temple YC and the Crouch YC. The event was held in late May, merged with the Dabchicks **Sail East Regatta** and run jointly by the two Clubs, with Vice Commodore Ed Allan chairing the organising committee. Race officer

Paul Jackson and his team ran three races on the Saturday round windward/leeward courses, followed by two 'round-the-cans' races on the Sunday.

The Championship was blessed with some welcome sunshine and sailed in light to moderate breezes, with the 22 boat fleet split into three classes. Yachts ranged from the top rated and newly launched HH42 carbon grand prix machine *Oystercatcher XXX* of Richard Matthews at 1.235 to Tim Wood's classic long keeled wooden Stella OD *L'Etoile*, rated at 0.766 – a difference of about 28 minutes an hour on handicap between the two! Interestingly, they finished tenth and eleventh in the first race. Overall and Class One winner was David Pinner's X35 *Kiss* from Haven Ports YC, but WMYC boats were well to the fore, with *Scallywag* winning Class Three and placing second overall, whilst Rob Leggett's Contessa 33 *Arctic Monkey* finished fourth overall and won Class Two, ahead of *JB's80* and Ray Aphthorp's J80 *Jezebel*. *Oystercatcher XXX* looked superb as she led her class and often the full fleet, but finished sixth overall, unable to save her time on the leading boats.



*Scallywag* leading the quarter tonner *Panic* and *Oystercatcher XXX*

Photo by Duncan Abel, Anglia Afloat



*Arctic Monkey*

Photo by kedwards.co.uk

The entry for the **Centenary Regatta** in June was severely reduced by the very strong winds, with one race cancelled. Leo Knifton's Melges 24 *Brandyhole* - the only boat to complete both races - won the trophy.

Nick Glanvill, Alan Vince and Hector Heathcote joined the fleet with their newly acquired Smokey 25 *Reasons To Be Cheerful* for the **Autumn Points Series**, and won the **Ellis Cup** on a windy day in September. The series experienced rather poor turnouts, except for the **Autumn Trophy** race which concluded both the series and the season. This saw ten boats start a very long race involving mainly foul tide legs which, most regrettably, ended with three boats unable to meet the extended five hour time limit. The course suited *Oystercatcher XXX*, which finished in three hours and won by 33 minutes; in contrast, just four minutes separated the next five boats, *Sallywag* squeezing into second place ahead of Paul Harrison's SB20 *Complete Madness*, with Ed Allan and Peter Rowe's Cork 1720 *Fizz* just 16 seconds behind the SB20 in fourth. *Sallywag* took the Autumn Series from *Reasons To Be Cheerful*, with Ed Taylor's Beneteau 31.7 *Toucan* in third.

*Sallywag* also won the Taxi Lewis Salver for the overall **IRC Club Championship**, ahead of *Fizz* and *Evita*.



*Kiss*, overall IRC East Coast winner

Photo by kedwards.co.uk



## HOME WATERS LOCAL HANDICAP RACING

The third year of the **White Sail Series** enjoyed a terrific turnout of 15 boats for the first race, sailed on a lovely sunny morning in early May, and during the series a total of 20 boats sampled this less full-on form of racing. Unfortunately, the weather in September saw the series rather tail off, but the clear winner was *Black Adder*, the West Solent OD of Richard and Sue Taylor. The next three places were very close, with Alan Jones' *Stella Peacock* taking second on tie-break from Vic Prior's MGC27 *Skybird* and *Starfall 2*, John Clifton's Sigma 33 only a point behind in fourth.

The popularity of the **Short Handed Series** also increased, with twelve boats competing in the opening race and a total of 19 boats sailing during the series, including some opting to go white sail and a few single-handers. *Sallywag* won the series from *Evita* and Geoff Hunt and Sally-Anne Turnbull's Club 19 *Bugsy*.

Like the Centenary Cup, the **Coronation Cup** in June was affected by the weather and a reduced entry sailed only two races, with Owen Wheatley's First Class 8 *Geronimo* taking the trophy.

The ever-popular **DSC Friday Series** was won by *JB's80* from Simon Farren's Sonata *Camel* – a repeat of last year's result – with Frank Reed's Hustler 32 *Tramp*, skippered by Doug Seaden third.

The **Ladies Regatta** in early August was again sponsored by Ambiance of Colchester, and saw an excellent 15 boat cruiser entry, with Frances Meason helming *Sallywag* winning from Margie Sansom in the West Solent *Linette* and Sally-Anne Turnbull with *Bugsy*; Sally-Anne also took the **Ambiance Trophy** for the best combined result in the morning cruiser and afternoon dinghy race.

Single handed sailors took full advantage of the six minutes per hour elapsed time benefit available to them, taking the top three places in the **Wallet Cup**, sailed on a breezy morning the day after the Ladies Regatta. Alan Jones in *Stella Peacock* won by eight minutes from Geoff Hunt in *Bugsy* and Mike Berry with his Finnulf 33 *Rendezvous*.

As usual, the season finished with the **Finola Cup** race, which had a good turnout of ten boats. In a long race, Steve Johnson's little Morrison Micro *Spot Marley* took the win, ahead of *Black Adder* and *Starfall 2*.



Ed Allan and crew on board Fizz

Photo by kedwards.co.uk



John Bolinbroke's J80

Photo by kedwards.co.uk

Thanks again go to Brian and Wendy Bolton with *Blue Horizon* for undertaking Race Officer duties for many of the Club's races, as well as for Mersea Week.

## BLACKWATER & COLNE OPEN SERIES

Early in the year, Richard Hayden came up with the idea for a new series, involving clubs on the Blackwater and Colne, and after meeting with representatives from the Blackwater Joint Racing Committee and the Colne Yacht Club, a three race series was put in place. Whilst this was all a bit last minute, it proved a great success, with fantastic 40-plus boat turnouts. For 2014, the Series will continue, with the benefit of some improvements being made following the experience of the first year, and with the same three classes. The inaugural year had 66 boats race in the main fleet, which was won by the Super Seal *Blue Moon* from Marconi SC. Local boats were to the fore, with *Evita* and Paul Harrison's Beneteau 33.7 *Maverick* finishing second and fifth respectively. In the IRC fleet, *Evita* finished first, ahead of the Brightlingsea based J80 *Jazz*, with *Maverick* in third. *Triton*, the Parker 27 from Blackwater SC took the top slot in the separate

White Sail fleet, ahead of *Skybird* and Peter and Alison Pangbourne's Northey 34 *Symbol of Lley*.

## AWAY FROM MERSEA

On 1st June, *Surf & Turf* was one of 1459 boats competing in Island SC's annual **Round the Island Race**, finishing second in the ten boat J80 class, just 35 seconds behind the winner. The crew especially enjoyed the spinnaker reach from The Needles to St Catherines, blasting past far larger yachts as they regularly hit 14/15 knots.

Two weeks later, *Jezebel* and Brian Denny's *Jalapeno* joined *Surf & Turf* at Cowes for the **J80 Nationals**, hosted by the Royal Yacht Squadron. Racing on one of the three days was lost because of strong winds, and in the 20 boat fleet, *Surf & Turf* was the best placed local boat, finishing ninth overall. Over the same weekend, the annual **Levington Classics Regatta** also suffered from strong winds. Best of the local boats was Rear Commodore Michael Wheeler's S&S 41 *Golden Fleece* which placed eighth overall. July saw five WMYC entries amongst the 24 boat fleet racing in the **Felixstowe Regatta**, the second Sail East qualifying event. After four races sailed in lightish airs, the most successful were **Oystercatcher XXX** (second in Class One and third overall) and *Jezebel* (second in Class Two and sixth overall).

Only *Oystercatcher XXX* represented the Club in **Cowes Week**, placing fifth overall in the 19 boat IRC Class Two. On her way back from the Solent, *Oystercatcher XXX* stopped off at **Ramsgate Week**, winning the Goodwins Noot Cup and the prestigious Gold Cup.

In late August, the Sail East series concluded with three races held in conjunction with the opening two days of **Burnham Week**. Placing fourth, fifth and eighth overall respectively were the three WMYC entrants - *Oystercatcher XXX*, *Scallywag* and *Arctic Monkey* - which were also third, first and second respectively in their different classes. The aforementioned three boats were very much to the fore in the 2013 **Sail East Series**, enabling West Mersea to win the club team trophy for the first time. *Oystercatcher XXX* finished second behind the Crouch based Humphreys 11m *Inn Spirit* in Class One, but took the overall title on tie-break from the same boat. *Scallywag* placed third overall and won Class Four, whilst *Arctic Monkey* took the Class Three top slot and finished fourth overall.

Burnham Week concluded with the **Burnham Town Cup**, won after a six hour race by a locally



based J133, by just 21 seconds from Robin & Rachel Gozzett's Dehler 39 *Phantom*, which in turn was just one second ahead of the third placed boat.

Sadly, the last few years have seen a decline in the number of boats stepping up from club racing to compete in both the (Sail East) inshore and (EAORA) offshore series. Just one Club boat –

Richard Bailey's Tartan Ten *Dark and Stormy* - competed in the required six races to achieve a score in the year's **EAORA Series**, placing sixth overall and second in Class Three, whilst *Oystercatcher XXX* sailed in four races, winning two of them, including the Buckley Goblets.

**JULIAN LORD**  
Hon Sailing Secretary

## Moorings & Boatyard

Although it was a surprise to me when I was asked to become Rear Commodore Moorings and Boatyard it was an honour to accept the role in succession to Jon French, as his term of office had come to an end. There were also some changes to the M & B committee with new people coming on board as well as plenty of club experience brought by Richard Taylor as Hon. Bo'sun.

By the time I took office all the winter maintenance of launches, moorings and race marks was well under way. This is what I call unseen work as much of it remains under covers in the launches, or under the water when it relates to moorings and race marks. For example, all race marks are lifted and brought ashore for maintenance and there is an extensive programme of lifting, checking and replacement of chain, rope, shackles etc where necessary for all the club moorings. Chain is an ongoing issue because of the corrosion caused by the extremely harsh environment in which it is placed. We spend substantial amounts on chain each year and it is becoming ever more of a challenge to achieve the

right balance of quality and cost - a task ably led by the Club Bo'sun, Andrew Twidell.

Operationally the season has not, despite our best efforts, been without disruption with both launches suffering mechanical problems. The major one was gearbox failure on the GRP launch which we believe was caused by a line getting caught around the shaft. In all cases we were able to maintain services to members with the assistance of Stewart Clark and Peter Clark's yard.

My job would not be possible without the contributions of the Hon. Bo'sun and all the M & B committee and also Club Bo'sun Andrew Twidell, and launchman Doug Seaden. My thanks to all of them and also to the office staff for their efficient administrative support. Since this is written in early November you will by now know of the departure of Doug Seaden. He has given excellent service to the club over the last three years and I wish him every success in his new venture, which is a return to sailmaking.

**BOB THOMAS**  
Rear Commodore M&B



*Secure moorings in Salcott creek*

# Spitzbergen revisited

In 2012 I lost my yacht *Arabel* off the coast of Spitsbergen (*Molliette Annual 2012*). Shortly afterwards, my friends David and Judy Lomax invited me to return to the island with them. Like me, they had sailed there twice before, but had not circumnavigated it.

On Saturday 3rd August this year we flew to Tromsø, where they keep their First 345, *Cloud Walker*. Rikki, their Norwegian son-in-law, would be joining us on the Wednesday morning. He is a professional yacht deliverer and had only just arrived in Plymouth, after a passage from Bermuda in a very slow boat. His wife Jane had insisted on seeing him for at least a couple of days before he set off on another voyage.

We eventually got away in light airs and a fine drizzle. The next few days were windy and uncomfortable and by Saturday teatime (10th August) we were off the southeast coast of Bjørnøya (Bear Island), looking into Sørhamna, one of the few possible anchorages around the island. A large ketch lay at anchor there, rolling horribly, so we continued up the coast to the next bay, Kvalrossbukta (Walrus Bay). On the shore we could see the remains of an old iron boiler, a relic of the whaling days. The wind was coming off the hills ahead of us at 25 knots, but if we dragged we would be dragging straight out to sea - so we



anchored anyway. Ninety minutes later we did drag and found our anchor to be enveloped in kelp. After re-anchoring closer inshore we had an uneventful night.

By the following evening we could see the snow-capped mountains of southern Spitsbergen, but it took us another day to reach Longyearbyen, the principal settlement. Within minutes of our arrival we were being hailed from ashore by Rikki's son, Magnus, who had flown up from Oslo to join us. The family reunion was celebrated late into the night.

After breakfast we registered our arrival at the Sysselman's office, Governor of Svalbad. Then it was time for lunch, shopping and laundry. That evening the skipper entertained his crew to a wonderful meal in a restaurant called Huset. The bill for five of us was approximately £800! It seems extraordinary that a restaurant of this kind can survive in a frontier town of about 2000 population – but such is Norway.

Thursday 15th August: refuelling, more shopping and an evening departure. We were bound for Ny Alesund. The wind rose to 20 knots on the nose, reaching 27 in the gusts. After about 40nm of this we reached the mouth of Isfjorden and were able to bear away northward, so life became calmer.

In Ny Alesund next day we were greeted by the huge young harbourmaster, Dag who remembered





me from last year. It seems that the story of *Arabel's* demise is quite well known in Spitsbergen.

On the following day we ambled about, looking at the timber buildings, the coal-mining relics, the old Zeppelin mast and the museum. Ny Alesund used to be a coal-mining settlement but after some horrific explosions the mines were closed. The King's Bay Company now manages the settlement purely as a polar research base, for visiting scientists from many different countries.

We had dinner in the settlement mess that evening. Once again, it was haute cuisine but this time, far cheaper. We were welcomed by the Director of the King's Bay Company and we met members of the current UK research team. As it was Saturday night, the pub opened after dinner, the bar being manned by scientists. It was much darker inside the pub than it was outside and it was very noisy, with loud music and wild dancing.

Sunday, 18th August brought F7 winds. We stayed put until the evening, so there was time for a longer walk ashore, where reindeer were grazing peacefully on the tundra.

Our next destination was Magdalenefjorden, the beautiful fjord which was *Arabel's* last anchorage. When we arrived it was windless and very sunny, so we all enjoyed a few hours wandering about.

We anchored for the night in Kobbefjorden, on the west coast of Danskøya, finding shelter in a small bay protected by a high bank of glacial moraine. An arctic fox was running backwards and forwards along the shore, trying to outwit a flock of birds at the water's edge. They defeated him by simply swimming away.

After a leisurely start next morning we motor-sailed northward outside Amsterdamøya, before turning north-east across Fair Haven, then more northerly again through Cooksundet (Cook Sound). We were now heading towards *Arabel's* nemesis, the reef called Kobbskjera, which the



skipper gave an offing of three miles. By 2130 that night we had reached the ring-shaped island of Moffen and anchored southeast of it in a wet



mist. A few minutes later we were visited by a group of inquisitive walrus that stayed for a while, gazing at us in a benevolent sort of way, and for some reason made me think of Ken Dodd.

We left after a late dinner, to sail for the northwest corner of Hinlopen Stretet (Strait). Just inside is a small fjord called Sorgfjorden and within that fjord is a headland called Heclahuken, named after Parry's Arctic exploration ship *HMS Hecla*. The recommended anchorage lies to the south of the hook but when we arrived it was a lee shore, so we anchored just to the north of it. We had to go close inshore to find anchoring depths and we did this rather cautiously, because the chart showed some submerged rocks. There was a lot of kelp.

Rikki and Magnus went ashore for a walk and encountered a large seal that seemed to find their presence disagreeable.



*Bearded seal*

After lunch we set sail again, this time bound for Murchisonfjorden, a large bay full of islands on the east side of Hinlopen Strait. The wind slowly increased and we reefed twice before gaining some shelter among the islands. We anchored in a bay on the north side of an island called Indre Russøya. Kelp was a problem again but we were successful at our second attempt.

At 1000 next morning, while most of us were having breakfast, we heard the forehatch being opened. Magnus, just out of his sleeping bag, raced along the side deck and with an anticipatory howl of anguish, leapt into the sea. He was out again in less than thirty seconds, seemingly none the worse for the experience. The sea temperature was 3°C.

We left at midday and made our way southward in very light airs. That night it became foggy and the radar was used to help navigate into a bay on the northwest corner of Wahlbergøya. The anchor went down at about 0300 and it was now universally deemed to be time for a Scotch.

A few hours later it was a glorious sunlit day and Rikki, Magnus and I all went ashore for a walk and collected wood for the stove. I found an enormous reindeer antler, which we took back to *Cloud Walker* and which for all I know, is still aboard.

On the following morning we were away early, in calm conditions and a slight haze, passing between scattered lumps of ice. At breakfast time a pod of orcas passed ahead, a big male with some females and a juvenile. They showed no interest in us, unlike most other dolphins who will go out of their way to call on passing yachts.

By early evening we had to decide which route to take out of Hinlopen Strait. Our shortest route would cut inside Barentsøya and Edgeøya, and then lead south down Storfjorden, the broad passage between those islands and the east coast of Spitsbergen. The nearest way through to Storfjorden was Heleysundet (Hell Sound) between Spitsbergen and Barentsøya. Heleysundet is narrow, crooked and about 5nm long, opening out into a wide basin at its western end. When it's high water at one end it's low water at the other and vice versa. The current runs at up to 10 knots.

We passed through Heleysundet at 13.9 knots over the ground, hoping that there were no uncharted rocks, then anchored for the night in a bay a few miles further south.

Nasty weather was now forecast for the Barents Sea, so it seemed prudent to shape our course westward once we were south of Spitsbergen, in order to go round the back of the weather system. Our homeward journey was not as unpleasant as the outward journey had been, but there was little to raise the spirits. For the next four days we had fresh to strong headwinds or no wind at all.







*Smeerenburgfjorden*

At 1430 on 31st August, in brilliant sunshine, we moored alongside a pontoon in the little fishing village of Torsvåg, about 45nm north of Tromsø, on the island of Vanna. We all had lengthy showers ashore, followed by a celebratory barbecue with local meat and sausages, on a verandah overlooking the harbour.

The next two days were spent making our way to Tromsø by a meandering route, calling in to visit a number of essentially abandoned islands. One or

two of the old houses had been restored as private holiday homes. The weather was idyllic and I could imagine happily spending time there, remote from the hubbub of the rest of the world.

These northern islands in all their summer beauty were engaging on a very human level, unlike the impersonal majesty of the Svalbard wilderness.

**CHRISTOPHER HAMBLIN**



*Gasvoer, Northern Norway*



# Club Cruises

I have been a member for many years and when Mike Berry asked if I would take on the role of Cruiser Captain I thought it only right to give a little effort back to the club. The year seemed well planned, all that was needed was the weather to play ball; and what a great season we have had! I know the trip to Harwich was a bit rough for some but the following two week cruise to Holland was brilliant and those that stayed on to cruise the rivers had a good week as well. It was my first trip to Gillingham Marina and I was very impressed with the venue; the views up and down the Medway from the clubhouse were wonderful.

Those of us who continued up to London had a great few days. However, the locking into St Katz was interesting due to a following wind into a very crowded lock! Unfortunately Carol & I could only make the BBQ at Heybridge thanks to Ian Brown as he picked us up from the airport on our return from Holland. We had taken a friend's boat from Levington to Amsterdam and beyond. The final rally to Tollesbury was wonderful, brilliant weather and such a relaxing weekend; thank you to that certain person who suggested that I add the event to the calendar and for Mike in organising the rally. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the organisers for their rallies.

**MELVYN DANIELS**  
*Cruiser Captain*

## Brightlingsea 11-12th May

Well, to kick off I took on organising the first rally which

was fairly easy. After superb weather for the bank holiday we were all holding our breath for the following weekend cruise to Brightlingsea. Unfortunately the weather didn't hold and we had gale force winds on the Thursday. We hoped it would blow over by Saturday. One skipper said, "As I told the crew to cast off the VHF announced a Gale Warning in Humber, Thames & Dover - Imminent ". With a nice strong South Westerly many boats sailed on just their genoas and we missed the predicted rain. Thirteen boats attended and had a great time. The carvery was good, the wine flowed. Denny Dodds and David Jarvis entertained us with a couple of hilarious jokes. Next morning the wind was still gusting 24 knots. Individually each boat decided to take a rain check on the trip up to Rowhedge and sailed or motored back against the wind to Mersea.

**MELVYN DANIELS**  
*Stargazer*

## Heybridge 8-9th June

Always a popular event, this year 25 boats attended of which some 50% cruised up on Friday to reduce congestion through the lock. We enjoyed a fine sunny day on Friday and again on Saturday morning for the pursuit race, but it all turned very cold (some used stronger language) for the Saturday evening barbecue with crews turning in early to their Eberspachers. Yes, those that had them were very popular!

First boat to finish the race was *Bargoose* but Mike Edwards graciously admitted to having started too early, thus conceding victory to Emma Kearin in *Life*.

The highlight of the weekend was an al fresco party on Saturday afternoon when John Haynes invited everyone present to celebrate his 78th birthday, a real family affair – four generations of Haynes attended! John of course has been closely involved in organising the Heybridge cruise for many years for which we owe him much thanks.



From left:  
John, Vinnie, Rhiannon, David, Jade, Michael, Mary and Paul



## Medway, Thames (and Orwell) 25-30th May

Ah, the joy of that period in the winter, when the Cruiser Captain gets elected at the AGM, the Cruiser Lunch comes around, and if you've raised an eyebrow suggesting you may like to assist, you find out what you've been landed with. Your willing correspondent got the 'Chatham and St Katz' cruise, and at the Cruiser Lunch discovered there was a huge degree of interest. The only problem was when I rang Chatham they declined our presence due to Bradwell CC and the Leisure Owners already booking 23 berths... Oh hum, what to do next? A quick discussion with our leader Mel, and we settled on Gillingham.

Neither of us had ever been there before, so it was a case of girding the loins in the depths of winter and driving down one weekend. Apart from a biting northerly wind, which cut right through, the welcome couldn't have been warmer. The environment looked lovely with lots of grass and trees, and there was even the possibility of a meal in "Spinnakers" – the bar and restaurant in the health club on site. What was even better St Katherines also had spaces for those who wanted to continue up the London River.

So, numbers were finally established and the good ships *Roamer* (Sue and Graeme Bowles), *Scruffy Duck* (Ginny and David Jarvis), *Just So* (Brigitte Texier-Pauton and Malcolm Clarke), *Starlight* (Fiona and Ian Brown), *Celeste* (Ian Conder), *Matilda* (Chrissie and Julian French), *Playpen* (Diane and Colin Campbell), *Tempus* (Linda and Viv Fox), *Stargazer* (Carol and Mel Daniels) and of course *Gladys* (Lynne and I) were all up at a very cold crack of sparrows (departing 0615) on

Saturday to catch the last of the ebb to the Spitway. Apart from the temperature (about 4C), it was a cracking morning with the wind out of the forecast North, giving a good reach virtually all the way.

Playing the role of good shepherd, we set off towards the tail of the fleet, and were slightly surprised to see a boat or two jilling around, slightly wary of the depth in the Spitway. Of course, part of the role of Cruise Leader was to Check These Things Out and, having been down that way a week or so before, I "knew" I had at least 1.5m under *Gladys'* 1.5m keel, so ploughed on (not literally). All went through safely, although *Starlight* was understandably nervous having grounded at the Nass that morning already.

*Some of the boats on passage:*



*Roamer*



*Playpen*



*Scruffy Duck*



*Matilda*

Then followed a memorable sail down past the Maplins – what a change not to be punching a SW on the flood!

We pretty much all arrived together around 1300, with *Gladys* trailing one or two others. Here, the advantage of being leader came to the fore, as *Gladys* was called forward to be first of the fleet in the lock. Everyone arrived in good order, shortly afterwards and *Gladys* (obviously) hoisted the Gin Pennant. Well, we've never had so many aboard, I think about 16 at the peak, and the ship looked like she was planing!

A short rest, and we all gathered for the early meal in Spinnakers. Perhaps the less said about that particular experience the better, but we did all eat together.



Sunday started to see the break up with one or two heading off early to get to the Orwell, and the rest doing their own thing, including the Dockyard and Chatham. Lynne and I opted to walk into Gillingham, and soon opted to carry on walking! However, this was a great benefit as we found an open space called the "Field of Fire" (open to allow artillery to protect the Dockyard) which led us up to a lovely Naval Memorial and down into Chatham town centre. Here, our feet deserted us and we took a bus to Chatham Marina and flopped down for a drink and very pleasant lunch in

the Ship and Trades overlooking the marina.

A pleasant evening was then spent drinking on various boats (*Starlight* and *Matilda* spring to mind, apologies if I missed anyone out) before an early night for the St Katz party who had another 0600 muster to take the ebb to Sheerness and the flood up the Thames. This small but select band consisted of *Roamer*, *Stargazer*, *Scruffy Duck*, and, of course, *Gladys*. *Scruffy Duck* had done the sensible thing and taken the ebb on Sunday to Queenborough.

We had a pleasant sail and motor sail, although the wind gradually picked up as we progressed until, by the time we were nearing our destination, it was blowing strong from the south. Locking in was due to start at 1400 and as *Scruffy Duck* had an early appointment with the Albert Hall, we let them go in first. Yet again, the pleasures of the organisational skills of St Katz, and the joys of bobbing around in the wake of Thames Clippers and (a new thing) RIB tripper boats, it was all great fun... as it was entering the lock with a Force 6 up the chuff. I don't think the brand new Beneteau that *Gladys* went alongside was over enamoured but that was his tough luck! Not a scratch was inflicted despite his best "know it all" efforts. The lock was bouncing up and down like merry hell, even with the outer gate closed as they took a whole hour to sort us all out. What on earth is the point of making arrangements to visit if they don't utilise the knowledge given to them on the booking form!



*Carol and Melvyn Daniels enjoying the sights*

We finally got into the central basin and rafted up astern of *Scruffy Duck* and *Stargazer* (how did they sneak in???) and adjacent to royal barge *Gloriana*. Great, thinks I, very close to the wonderful facilities in the lock





*The Gloriana with Stargazer and Gladys in the background*

building! Ha, no such luck... Only St Katz could plan to refurbish toilet blocks in summer and then at a Bank Holiday!!! It was a mere route march of 10-15 minutes each way...

The weather by this time had gone downhill and we were treated to the early summer mixture of heavy rain and cold. The only points of note were a visit to the Little Ship Club on Tuesday – again a very warm welcome to we happy three (SD were carrying out grandparenting duties) and an excellent dinner, plus an interesting walk for Lynne and I around Borough Market on Wednesday.

*Roamer* departed with the tide Wednesday morning, whilst the rest of us stayed a day longer for yet another 0600 departure on Thursday. What made this escapade even more enjoyable

was waking to the sound of the rain hammering down on the deck. Not daunted, we all got out promptly and hared off with the ebb. En route *Stargazer* thought they would aim to “do it in one” as did *Scruffy Duck*; we would have too, except that on hoisting the main near the Thames Gateway port, there was a thump and a rustle of sail as the knot on the main halyard came adrift, the halyard disappeared into the mast, and rattled down to the bottom... With insufficient fuel to get back to Mersea, the good ship *Gladys* finally made it to Chatham in the vain hope of a rigger being available (he wasn't) or at least the opportunity to top up on diesel. Refuelling proved to be a wise move as we didn't get the halyard fixed until Mersea.

The postscript to this sorry tale was that Chatham had new pontoons installed (another full

row or two), and I could see no reason why they hadn't been able to accommodate us in the first place!

Well, the fleshpots of Chatham only kept us overnight, and the final 0600 departure of a week's holiday (holiday? - off at 0600 all those times?) got us back to Mersea on Friday afternoon. A good cruise, despite St Katz and the weather, made joyful by the joviality of the participants. My thanks to all who attended for making my job as co-ordinator so simple.

**LARRY BOTHERAS**  
*Gladys*

**Harwich and Holland 20th  
July – 5th August**

Of the record 21 boats that put their names down for the club cruise to Harwich nearly all started and got there safely.



Ray Apthorp (left) collects his silver

Some even managed to stay in the pursuit race despite an uncomfortable thrash to windward all the way down the Wallet. Line honours went to Ray Apthorp in *Kahuna*, followed by Alan Mason in *Dura* and Colin Campbell in *Playpen*.



Playpen in racing mode

Once safely locked in to Shotley marina and whilst others were busying themselves with preparing food and fiddling with barbecues on the bank the crew of *Just So* had the bright idea of putting a slight twist on the theme. Ending a rough journey

with a smooth finish, they ordered an Indian take-away to be delivered to the marina, and very nice it was too!

The fleet split up on Sunday and went their separate ways. After



Malcolm Clark collects his dinner



waiting a further 24 hours for clear weather four boats - *Centayne*, *Gladys*, *Kahuna* and *Just So* – set sail for Holland (see Brigitte's article elsewhere in this issue).

**COLIN CAMPBELL**  
*Playpen*

### Tollesbury 5/6th October

Although fairly late in the season for a cruise in company the fleet were blessed with the most fantastic autumn weekend: bright sunshine, a zephyr of breeze, clear blue skies and mellow fruitfulness all around!

Seven yachts made the passage to Tollesbury and once in the 'trade winds' made great haste to these magical backwaters, and were soon enjoying a well earned 'liverner' in the very hospitable TCC! It was particularly encouraging to see three new yachts joining in the fun of cruising in company, namely *Moonstone*, *Life* and *Sea Weasel*, all of whom expressed a wish to partake in some of the planned cruises for next summer. That evening 23 cruising members sat at one large, fairly well behaved, table at the TCC and all agreed the food was excellent!

The following morning dawned with the brightest sunshine and breakfast was taken in the cockpit of most yachts. A spring high tide at circa 14.00 meant that most yachts were over the sill at 12.30 and back at the WMYC for a beer on the lawn at lunchtime!

A great little cruise to end the season, which once again has proven the continued success and popularity of the 'Cruises in Company'.

**MIKE BERRY**  
*Rendezvous*



# Ted Hood

## The yachtsman who did it all



American Ted Hood passed away in June 2013 at the age of 86. His contribution to our sport was far greater than many sailors on this side of the Atlantic appreciate.

Ted was one of very few men in the marine industry to design, build and sail his own yachts as well as designing and making their sails, spars and other equipment.

For many years Hood were the largest sail makers in the world and, taking advantage of Ted Hood's skill as a chemist and engineer, operated their own

looms making special narrow panel dacron sailcloth that held its shape better than other fabrics. In the 60's and 70's Hood was the prime source of winning sails for ocean racing with lofts in the USA and Lymington. Every America's Cup defender between 1958-1977 carried Hood sails. As rival North Sails' CEO Tom Whidden once said, "You could not teach a sailmaker to see what Ted Hood saw".

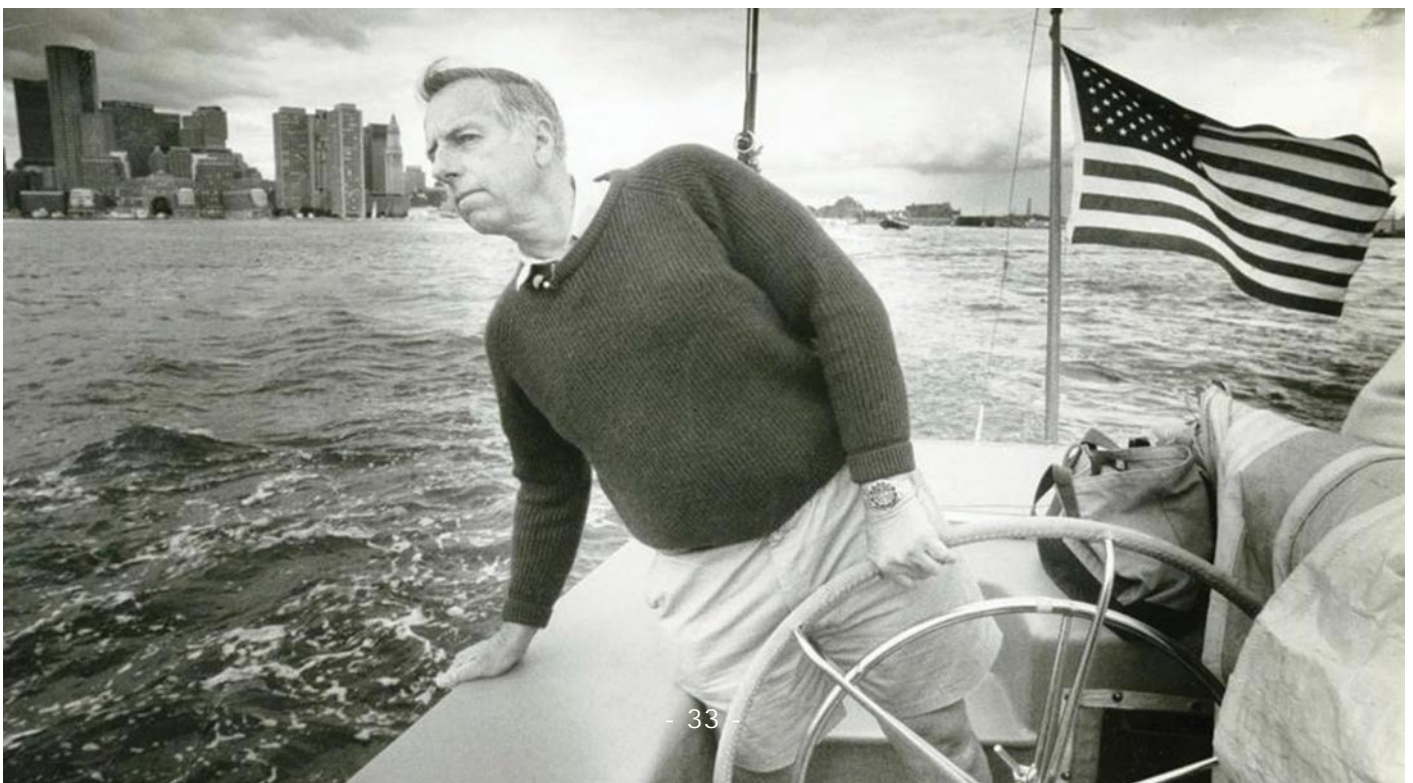
He designed the 12 metres *Nefertiti* and *Independence* for the America's Cup and sailed aboard *Courageous* during her cup victory in 1974. He designed and built a series of highly successful centreboard racing yachts named Robin, winning the SORC overall and numerous other races. He was a modest, shy man despite living in a house filled with trophies.

Hood founded Little Harbor Yachts, building and selling high quality cruising yachts of his own design throughout the

world. He made his own spars and invented and developed in-mast furling, establishing the Hood Stoway as a world leader with manufacturing in the USA and Burnham on Crouch. He is credited with inventing jib roller furling and the grooved luff foil in everyday use today. The Hood Gemini headfoil was the first commercially available twin stay system. He is also credited with inventing dip pole spinnaker gybing. As a designer Ted Hood was responsible for some 1,500 yachts from various builders, both power and sail.

As my ex-company Oyster gained traction in the USA I was fortunate to get to know Ted Hood and his family. On one occasion I was lucky enough to enjoy Ted's company while watching one of the '95 America's Cup races on TV at a bar in Antigua: a rare privilege sharing the action with a man who had 'been there and done that', in every sense of the word.

**RICHARD MATTHEWS**



# Cadet Week



*Joe Purdey – winner of Corinthian Gold Fleet*

This year we once again had 160-plus cadets of the Dabchicks Sailing Club and West Mersea Yacht Club taking part in a wonderful week of racing and packed social events. Many thanks to all the sponsors and supporters of the week, namely Peter Bessie and Essex Helicopters, Anna Gibson with Micro Scooters, The Royal Hospital School, Gordon Eckstein, Amanda and Ben Woodcraft with Mersea Island Cookery school, Richard Davenport with Davenport Interiors. Without their financial support we would be having to charge considerably more, so thank you for keeping the week affordable and I hope you all enjoyed it as much as we did.

The weather conditions this year were testing to say the least, with only one fleet of Optimists getting out on Monday. Our new Inside Fleet Race Officer, Simon Clifton, set a small course tucked in the lee of Old Hall Point on a half tide. Sailing for the first time in strong wind the children excelled and all came ashore. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday all had good sailing conditions, steady winds but testing at times.

Simon opted to split the inside Optimist fleets so that time on the water could be optimised, with the newest sailors sailing in the calm protected waters at the top of Salcott. The seamanship activity was once again a success for all those who took part.

Outside Fleets Principal Race Officer, Roger Sydenham, set great courses with his team on the committee boat *Alderney*, kindly lent by the Joles', keeping score. I was told by an experienced sailor who was on a support boat for the week that it was as good a race management as any regatta he'd attended.

These conditions kept the support boat crews on their toes. Led by Gordon Eckstein Mersea dentist, they did a sterling job keeping track of everyone, though it has to be said some of the cadets were not suitably attired for four hours of racing in an English summer and a few were brought ashore early and very cold. The quote from a cadet that sticks in my mind, as





*A gathering of young Optimists*



*Alderney on station*

he was being helped up the hard by one of the beach crew after four races in the stiff breeze, was, "That was the best sailing ever". No doubt hungry and tired, but to hear that makes me believe we have another generation of people hooked on our lovely sport.

Friday's conditions were light and variable. Inside Fleet stayed ashore but Outside Fleet went out and with a small window of steady breeze the PROs team of mark layers set a course in record time for one last race.

It would be fair to say that the winners of each of the fleets sailed consistently well through a complete range of conditions and without doubt gained the

respect of their fellow competitors.



*Close quarters excitement*

This year our theme was 'Round the World'. With so many great races and regattas happening across the globe we were keen to widen the horizon beyond our creeks and estuary, and who better to present prizes than a skipper of the Great Britain yacht in the Clipper Race 2013, our very own Simon Talbot, who himself learned to sail on this patch of water. Pete Bessie organised a private air show for us all and then, once dark, a fireworks display.

If any of you would like to help next year just make yourself known. We have a number of grandparents helping, themselves ex cadets, who by all accounts had a great week as well. Even with all the mandatory support of parents the beach, run by Sue Green, could always do with a few more hands dragging the 160 odd trolleys up and down.

Our thanks go out to all the staff and members of the clubs who supported Cadet Week. The wonderful and hard working Committee are already planning next year's event starting on 28th July.

**WILL CROSSLEY**  
Chairman Cadet Week

# A to Z in the Atlantic

The next leg of our *Resting Goose* adventure.

At the end of the sailing season 2012, we tucked up *Resting Goose* for the winter in the very efficient Wayfarer yard at Camden, Maine. We worried about snowdrifts and high winds – both of which she experienced – but our faithful Mussett winter cover kept her well protected from the elements and when we returned at the end of May this year, we found her to be sweet smelling and as lovely as ever. What was even better was that the yard had launched her and done all the preparations so that, after a 3 hour bus journey up from Boston, we could just step aboard and make a meal from our stores (some of which dated back to our European leg in 2010!).

We planned to cross from A (America) to Z (the Azores) and then make our minds up where to go next. We checked out the weather with Commanders' Weather information service and their advice was to get going as soon as we could: for the previous four weeks there had been nothing but easterlies but there was a window of south westerlies coming up which would make for a fast journey, especially as strong winds were forecast. That galvanised us and, after a trial sail to check out our new Dolphin sails, we slipped out of Camden at the crack of dawn on 1st June. With the sun coming up and a flat calm, it was a beautiful departure. By the time we had reached the mouth of Penobscot bay, a breeze had got up and we were soon reaching along, happy to have started out on our next adventure.

To our surprise, about 5 nm from shore, we were joined by a fourth crew member – a tiny little bird which we decided, after due consultation of our many bird books, could have been a magnolia warbler.



It stayed with us for over an hour but thankfully decided to fly back in the direction of land before we set off across the Petit Manan Channel. Jamie

saw his first (and only) whale spout of the journey ... and then the fog descended for the next 24 hours. It is a strange feeling, sailing fast through thick fog hour after hour – we felt quite cocooned in our little bubble but we were very grateful for the reassurance of AIS and radar.

We settled down quickly into our watch system – with three of us, 2 hours on and 4 hours off seemed to work well and the night watches in particular didn't seem too onerous. But the corkscrewing of the boat through the confused seas off Nova Scotia made cooking a bit of a chore! So we were relieved when we could finally set a more easterly course with more regular swells. We had checked with the weather forecasters about the ice limit but, even though they assured us that no bergs had been sighted, we were sailing through the southern end of the charted ice limit – and only two nautical miles south of the Titanic's watery grave – so it was in all our thoughts!

After the fog, we had a beautiful day of deep blue skies and a steady 15 knot breeze. We were bowling along at 8.5 knots, minding our own business, in the middle of nowhere, when we suddenly heard a throaty roar in the sky. A Canadian Patrol Aircraft was cruising overhead. Imagine our surprise when we heard our name on the VHF – we've never been called up by a plane on Channel 16 before! They were quite chatty, wanted to know who we were and where we were going – and then asked if they could use us as practice for sonar buoy dropping! It was a spectacular sight to see such a plane fly at low level, making several passes before finally wagging its wings and flying off into the sunset.



By Day 4, we could see that our spell of good weather was coming to an end. Astern of us, from one end of the horizon to the other, we could see the front approaching steadily – a rather daunting



sight. The wind got up steadily through the evening and, by nightfall, we were down to two reefs in the main. Suddenly, there was a very polite call from Jamie, "Can I have some help please?" – the foresail had collapsed onto the deck and was trailing in the water. We flew into action but feared the worst for our brand new genoa. Thankfully, we were able to get it back on deck and, in the light of the next day, found that the stainless steel shackle had actually sheared. As luck would have it, the wind dropped and backed, allowing us to hoist the cruising chute; it then faded altogether (the lull before the storm as we found later) so it was engine on – and a nice flat galley to cook supper! Taking advantage of the weather, the next morning Jamie got the rod out and we were soon tucking into a delicious fresh yellow-fin tuna ceviche for lunch and pan-fried steaks for supper. It doesn't get better than that!



And it didn't. From that day, the wind got steadily stronger. Soon, with 40 knots across the deck, we were down to the working jib and a third reef in the main – the first time we have had to do this on the *Goose* in over 20,000 nm of sailing. But we now had Flores, the first island of the Azores archipelago, in our sights – well, at least on the plotter! Frustratingly, the wind angle meant we had to gybe north for some hours. With *Resting Goose* trucking at 9-10 knots, it was fast sailing but we were glad to reach Jimmy Cornell's waypoint and find that we could then gybe for the island. Despite having an impressive volcanic mountain, we saw nothing of the island until we

were quite close as the weather was very humid. We had heard that the little port of Lajes is untenable in anything from north to east but, whilst gale force, the wind was still in the south west so, with relief, after nine and a half days, 1750 nm and three attempts, we finally got the anchor down in the outer bay and cracked open a bottle of wine to toast our arrival.

With 30-35 knots still blowing the next day, it was quite bouncy in the bay so, after a shore party exploration, we entered the little port and rafted up alongside a Grand Soleil 52, *Fabiola*, with a lovely young family on board. The harbour master was delightful and very welcoming – a trait we were to find is common to all the Azoreans we met. After a car trip round the island (named after flowers, it was our first introduction to the ever-present hydrangea hedge although they hadn't quite got into bloom in early June), we decided to move on to Faial but in retrospect we should have spent longer on this gentle island. It is to windward by some 130 nm so most boats cruising the Azores from the east don't reach that far and, with its uncertain harbour, we didn't get back to it.



Sailing into Horta on the island of Faial, with the dramatic backdrop of Pico across the water, was thrilling. It is such a staging post for boats crossing the Atlantic - the only island we had really heard about before our visit and one we definitely wanted to see. Its harbour provides temporary shelter for over 1500 yachts every year, sailing in from all corners of the world – 53 different nationalities were recorded last year! So, having a gin and tonic at the renowned Peter's Sports Bar is a truly international experience! We had decided to come to the Azores at the time of the Ocean Cruising Club rally – over 25 boats converged on Horta, all with their OCC burgees fluttering to welcome fellow OCC members on board for drinks. Many of them were making their way slowly back to the UK after years of live-aboard sailing round the world so it was fascinating to talk with them. We always learn so much picking the brains of fellow cruisers.

Before we left the island, we followed the time-honoured tradition of painting our boat name and



David writing for posterity

logo on to the harbour wall. Now we understand how Banksy feels when he creates outdoor graffiti! It was fascinating to stroll down the wall in the evening to look at all the signs that have been painted there over the years.

The Azores are not a beach destination – those who love walking can enjoy spectacular views from the volcanic trails – but they are wonderfully laid back and, with very small populations (only 250,000 spread across the nine islands), life is very gentle. In Faial, we visited the new volcanic interpretation centre – they suffered an eruption in the 1950s and the story of its impact is well displayed in a very unobtrusive underground exhibition hall near the lighthouse at the western tip of the island. Pico, dominated by its 2351 metre high conical mountain, is a mecca for hikers who all strive to reach the top but, all too often, it becomes shrouded in cloud and they have to abandon the attempt. We did not even try!



Pico from Faial

St Jorge has more cows than people – and some wonderful cheese! We loved our stay there – the little harbour is home to some 30 yachts but also thousands of extremely noisy Cory Shearwaters, roosting on the cliff face. Their call is so strange, it was fascinating listening to them. Graciosa is the northernmost island in the central group – and the holiday island for the Azoreans – nothing happens there, it's so laid back it's horizontal!

Terceira is the fifth and easternmost island of the central group which spans some 60nm. The third largest of the whole archipelago, shopping in its capital, Angra do Heroísmo (designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983) is positively cosmopolitan! Angra also hosts the best fiesta which lasts for nine days late into the night (the Azoreans certainly know how to enjoy themselves). We were transfixed by the processions of dancers and musicians – on one night, 24 groups came through, each one sporting different, beautifully designed outfits. Strictly Come Dancing, eat your heart out!



We even managed to find a regatta to compete in – we enlisted crew from a neighbouring French boat and *Fabiola's* little family (they had followed us to Terceira) and came a creditable 2nd in the open class. Great fun!

From Terceira, we sailed 90nm down to Sao Miguel (the capital of the island chain) and then on to Santa Maria – the sunshine island – before turning back to the central group and Terceira where we had decided to leave the boat so that we could come back to enjoy Mersea in August. Whilst in Sao Miguel, after paying our six month Portuguese visitor tax, we proudly got our temporary Portuguese residents' permits. What a difference that makes to berthing fees! We certainly feel that we have only skimmed the surface of the islands and, after a further four weeks cruising in September, and having got to know the marine people in Angra, we made the decision to stay for a second season.

So, *Resting Goose* is now safely hauled out in their little hard standing area, with tie-downs and her Mussett cover back on. This time we have a humidifier on board – a necessity in the mild but very wet Azorean winter. But we are certain that we will return to a sweet-smelling and beautifully looked-after *Resting Goose* next May.

ANN CHATTERTON  
*Resting Goose*



# Congratulations Doctor Clark!

Colchester Institute has awarded Saskia Clark an honorary Doctorate in recognition of her distinct contribution to sailing.



Club member Saskia became a household name after she, along with team mate Hannah Mills, won a silver medal in Weymouth during the London 2012 Olympic games. Originally from West Mersea, Saskia began sailing at the Royal Harwich Yacht Club and quickly grew to love the sport. Another major triumph for Saskia was winning the 470 World Championship in Barcelona in May 2012, again with Hannah, becoming the first ever British women to do so.

Speaking to a packed audience, which included her proud parents in the Moot Hall Colchester, Saskia delivered a motivational speech and urged her audience to “not fear failure”.

# Holland ... which way?

The North Sea is renowned for its intimidating shipping lanes and numerous sandbanks. Crossing it was a big deal for us, "first timers" in our 26-footer!

Our cruise to Holland really started on Saturday 20th July with the Mersea to Harwich Pursuit Race and BBQ at Shotley. We were to leave the next morning but an unfavourable weather forecast forced us to stay one more day. There had been reports of fog and a mere two cables visibility in the shipping lanes. For this reason a few of us took the ferry to Harwich to enjoy lunch at The Pier Hotel.

## Collision at sea

On our way back to Shotley we had our first and hopefully only collision at sea! We were all on the foot ferry when we noticed the sightseeing boat *Orwell Lady* approaching from our starboard side. We became increasingly concerned as both vessels got closer and closer and neither seemed willing to give way or slow down. We truly thought they were fooling around. Everybody on-board could foresee the inevitable result, except the two skippers! I stood up and watched the bow of this 57ft long 42 tonnes beast aimed at us amidships like a huge whale shark. At that moment Malcolm shouted, "He's going to hit us!" Our skipper suddenly looked up (from his phone!) and immediately put the engine astern, avoiding a major disaster but not soon enough... we were hit on the bow! At the time, the shock left us rather numb and I remember we said, "Well, we only got rammed on the bow!"

## Oostende here we come!

Weather reports for the following day were favourable at last so at 0430 four boats were locking out of Shotley Marina: *Centayne* with our Cruise Leaders Mel and Carol and Captain Dave, *Gladys* (Larry and Lin), *Kahuna* (Ray & Debbie) and *Just So* (Malcolm & myself). Unfortunately we got the sad news, in the lock, that *Kahuna* had an unexpected delay and Ray and Debbie would only join us a couple of days later. Thus we started as a three boat cruise.

On approach to the northern edge of the Long Sand, we were met by the awesome sight of the Long Sand Head itself slightly raised above the sea level... the waves breaking over it! Be sure to follow your course and beware of night crossings, we thought in unison! We followed Ray's advice to head south round Long Sand Head, taking advantage of the predicted easterly wind and flooding tide, before crossing the first shipping

lane, and to ease the monotony of the long stretch we set the autopilot on.

At 09.05 we encountered some very shallow water to starboard, a tiny 0.2m below the keel, which left us a bit shaken. The tide was obviously pushing us onto the Kentish Knock and we quickly tacked just to start crossing the bottom end of the Sunk shipping channel.

So far Ray's plan had worked... we had managed speeds of 7.8 to 9 knots over the ground and been able to keep sight of *Gladys* in front of us and stay ahead of *Centayne* until they both altered course to cross at the recommended point. Unfortunately for the rest of the journey, as we motor-sailed across tide, our speed was to drop ... averaging 5.5 knots.

## On the 9th hour of our passage... Malcolm stripped!

On the 9th hour of our passage we were both struggling to keep awake and being our first crossing we felt neither of us should take a nap. To try and make good time we were motor sailing, travelling long tacks under autopilot, and the monotonous noise of the engine was dulling our vigilance. I suddenly remembered that Malcolm, pre-empting this fatigue had the great idea to take on board some Pro-Plus energy tablets and cans of Red Bull drink, all very much based on caffeine input. With at least five more hours to go and still crossing the shipping lane, we both agreed: "now is the time to use it!"

I will admit that I didn't expect too much help from it. Well... 20 minutes later, with light air, beating sun and no ships in sight, Malcolm was taking his shirt and trousers off, splashing sun tan oil and starting to work on an all-over suntan! I found myself giggling at his sudden burst of energy, thinking that stuff truly works. To my surprise I realised that my last fix was taken nearly three hours ago. It goes to show how the mind can sign off and leave you drifting in a semi-conscious state with no sense of time.

At 14.15 we finished crossing the scheme, entered French water for a while and accordingly Malcolm raised... but of course... the French flag, what a sight! Eventually we reached Belgian waters and crossed the very last TSS, West Hinder, in 34



minutes. However, the sheer volume of big ships on the horizon in the approach to Oostende became rather daunting. In order to keep out of the main channel we went through Oost Dyck Anchorage marked on the chart where several ships stood still at anchor... but the long journey made us weary and worried, imagining that they might start moving. Heading for Oostende harbour entrance we got our first sighting of *Centayne* since the Sunk channel and were pleasantly surprised to find that we were still ahead! Captain Dave and his crew made a last minute push to get past the smallest boat in the fleet and under full throttle finally overtook us as we were motoring up to the entrance.



*Some had a less stressful crossing:  
Capt. Dave at the helm.*

At 20.15 local time, after a journey of 14hrs 45mins we entered Oostende harbour, proudly flying the Belgian flag to starboard and the Breton flags to Port, along with our WMYC burgee (of course).

*Gladys* and *Centayne* were already moored in the Royal Yacht Club Oostende (RYCO) marina and came to lend a hand and welcome us. As I stepped onto the very narrow pontoon, I recall Carol looking genuinely concerned, and asking me, "How was it?"

I had to smile, we had been blessed with a wonderful crossing in lovely weather and good visibility (although we could have done with more wind). 79nm and nearly 15 hours later we had made it, as Jim McNaughton would say, "to foreign shores"! ... So yes, "It had been a great and a needed experience", I replied! But it also made me aware of the vulnerability of a 26ft yacht static in the shipping lanes with the possibility of bad weather and poor visibility, of the dependence on a rather small engine and the vigilance of only two people for such a long period. I couldn't help thinking, already dreading the return journey, that I'd rather do shorter crossings and added: "But... sod that for a game of soldiers!" I'm not sure if it was my French accent and a very English phrase or the thought of the tedious crossing but everybody burst out laughing and nodded accordingly.

The next day we enjoyed a well-deserved rest and walked along Oostende's famous seaside esplanade with its row of seafood stalls. It looks like a real fun town, very family and kids orientated.

Having made some research on Google, Larry was able to further instruct us on navigation skills and duly demonstrated it by using his mobile phone's "SatNav" application to guide us to... a Lidl supermarket!

#### **Oostende to Flushing... several tricky areas.**

It took us 5 hours 45 minutes from Oostende to Vlissingen (Flushing), some 32 Nm. The passage was mainly pilotage as we followed a succession of buoys along the shoreline but Mel, our cruise leader, had warned us of several tricky areas, "Beware of the traffic from Zeebrugge, be sure to stay out of the main channel, and look out for the ferry channel and traffic from Breskens". We reached Vlissingen at 1530 just in time to lock in with *Centayne* and *Gladys*.

#### **Bells chiming to the tune of "Love Story"**

In contrast to the strong current on approach to Flushing we found it very charming and relaxing to meander up the Kanaal door Walcheren towards Middleburg, so much so that we dilly-dallied on the way and missed the opening of the fourth bridge and had to wait 40 minutes with still one to go!

My recollection of Middleburg, capital of Zeeland, is firstly of box moorings: going in stern first to find out that the rudder's space left us with too big a gap to step onto the quay. We did it again bow first and successfully mastered both manoeuvres, much to the disappointment of our audience (sitting beer in hand on his deck-chair, not mentioning any names!). Other memories include:



*Just So in the canals at last*

bells chiming to the tune of "Love Story"; *Kahuna*, having sailed all day from England, joining us for a lovely meal at the Yacht Club; the once-a-year Sea Festival with 100 barges rafted up along the quay; and the annual Mosselfeesten devoted to celebrating the arrival of the fresh black mussels, of which Zeeland is particularly proud; and last but not least, the mixed showers in the Yacht Club building... which invited a bit of banter from one cubicle to the next.

### **Up the canal... Fun... Fun... Fun!**

We left Middleburg and in less than three hours went up the Veerse Meer canal, through a lock and to Kortgene's very smart Delta Marina, wonderfully located in the sheltered Lake Veer. Awarded the blue flag label, its remarkably clean water was too tempting and soon Debbie was in and Ray brought out his paddle board for all of us to have a laugh. Well... some more than others, depending on who was on it!



*Ray and Malcolm outside the mixed showers. It's all under control...*

That day, John and Linda Kent from Mersea, and their three daughters (Alice, Sarah & Cathie) joined us on their boat *Pufnstuf* as part of their holiday tour.







All aboard *Kahuna*, we went for a sail to Veere, a delightful historical town that has strong connections with Scotland dating all the way back from the wool trade between 1541 and 1799. We actually came across a wedding party with the men dressed in formal Highland wear, kilts and sporrans.

the giant Zeelandbrug, the longest bridge in the Netherlands spanning the Oosterschelde estuary (at the time of its completion in 1965, it was the longest bridge of Europe).



*Veere street scene*

Back to the canals, at each locking we could hear some strange loud command akin to "cleatoff lin", sometimes getting harsher and reverberating in the lock. Initially we thought "cleatofflin!" was a Dutch nautical term but then we recognised a stressed Cornish accent and finally realised it should translate as, "Secure the mooring line as quickly as possible Linda, please"... Lin, we hope the wedding is still going ahead!

### **Zierikzee... poetry in motion!**

Our next port of call, past the bascule bridge at ZandKreekluis and under the movable section of



*Kahuna negotiates the Zeelandbrug*

We finally rafted up in Zierikzee at 1630, alongside other boats already tied up with only one long line to shore for all of them. We thought: "this will be fun if the boat nearest to the quay decides to leave in the morning". It did happen, fortunately not in our row, and it was interesting! All got out moving very slowly, one left and the rest came back, like a dance: poetry in motion!

### **Time to travel back...**

On 30th July our fleet of four yachts made its way



*Happy days in port:  
Kahuna, Centayne,  
Gladys, Brigitte,  
Debbie and Lin*



*...and again in town*

back to Middleburg where we headed straight for the fuel pontoon. It was the first refill since Oostende and she was thirsty! Over a meal at the Yacht Club we discussed the options for our next passage. A bad forecast with strong winds left us undecided as to the likelihood of getting to Oostende. We decided on two alternatives: short leg Bresken or medium leg Zeebrugge!

#### **Concerned not to slow down the fleet**

The next day we were making our way laboriously towards Zeebrugge under motor and reduced sails when Mel radioed us to ask how we felt about the journey. Knowing that *Centayne* and *Gladys* had a tight schedule, we were so concerned not to slow down the fleet that we decided to keep going towards Oostende. We were totally unaware that everybody else was quite keen to stop. We found out later that Larry had already called Zeebrugge Harbour Control to ask permission to go in. Meanwhile *Kahuna* was experiencing an engine problem and was facing the rest of the journey under sail only, with Debbie on the winches. Nonetheless, following our apparent eagerness, the fleet carried on! With a strong headwind forcing us repeatedly to tack across the tide, the journey was so uncomfortable that the log simply reads: "Cannot record much / really bumpy and wet/ tiresome and enough to put you off sailing! Not funny but *Just So* handles it well. Good boat..."

#### **The boys decided to examine their dipsticks**

We finally got to Oostende at 1800. Back at the marina, Malcolm and Dave got onto *Kahuna* as Ray's engine was leaking oil badly. After a thorough investigation... all the boys decided to examine their dipsticks and it was agreed that the problem was that Ray's one was definitely worn out! Thank goodness, it was not a critical failure!

At this point, having reached Oostende on the day, *Centayne* and *Gladys* were able keep to their plan to leave rather early the following morning for Harwich. But Debbie, having had more than her share of "winching" on *Kahuna* for several hours was rather reluctant to move. Anyhow Ray had to sort his dipstick out... so they proposed to stay a few more days and carry on to Dunkerque and finally return via Ramsgate... a much shorter crossing. No... we didn't need to think about it for very long: "That will do us, " Malcolm and I hurried to agree!

Thus we parted... after a lovely farewell drink on *Centayne* and teasing them about not making too much noise in the morning when leaving at 05.00 ... two boats went and two boats stayed!

#### **They say good things happen...**

Well, Oostende to Dunkerque turned out to be a great sail! Favourable wind and tide, brilliant sunny weather and good speed. We put the sails up on leaving Oostende harbour and put them down only on entrance to Dunkerque harbour... no engine sound ... heaven for four hours and 24.6 miles!

Dunkerque is a big commercial port that can accommodate the largest ships with draughts of up to 22 metres. Once inside the harbour entrance, we followed the long breakwater down towards the marina at Port du Grand Large where Ray and Debbie had secured a place for all of us.



**The French way of life... A certain "je ne sais quoi".**

As France's third-ranking port and second-ranking port for trade with Great Britain, we regarded Dunkerque as nothing more than an industrial zone in northern France but we were pleasantly surprised to see a thriving and developing town, totally embarked on a revitalising project of its centre including the regeneration of the Port du Grand Large's wasteland and proudly holding, this year, the cherished title of "Capitale de la Culture"...

There is definitely something about the French way of life... A certain "je ne sais quoi" that simply makes you slow down, unwind and appreciate the moment. Over the following three days we relaxed... had such laughter interacting with the French. We walked along the esplanade, ate out on the terrace in the evening with no real worry as to the closing time, practised the art of "people watching", a hobby the French are so good at! Oh... and Malcolm getting his soldering torch out to caramelize Debbie's DIY "crème caramels".



**Wake up.... We are going back to England...**

Sunday 4 August. Out of Dunkerque harbour entrance, en route for Ramsgate, 40Nm. Ten miles out we started crossing the TSS, watching out for heavy traffic from port, past Sandettie Bank, into English water and we now had to check for traffic from starboard, to finish crossing at South Falls. Beware of the Goodwin Sands: there was no sign of land but we knew it was lying under there. *Kahuna* had made good time to Ramsgate and was pleased to see us into port. We had another fantastic sail without engine except to leave Dunkerque and enter Ramsgate; we had made it in 7½ hours, half an hour ahead of our ETA, in time for a relaxing afternoon and a stroll on the quay where the Old Gaffers Association were celebrating their 50th Anniversary. That evening the four of us visited the Royal Temple YC and shared a lovely meal in an Italian restaurant close by.

**Back to Mersea through the gaps... not clever!**

Returning across the Thames Estuary proved to be quite a challenge. After transiting Fisherman's Gat, we had an ingenious plan to carry on to the next gap below South West Sunk instead of bearing right up the Black Deep channel (the word "deep" being the clue).

As we were travelling across the ebbing tide towards Barrow No.6. we became increasingly concerned with the shallow parts surrounding us. Just as we recorded the depth decreasing alarmingly down to 1.1m, Ray called on the VHF to warn us that he had even less underneath and declared, "Seems to me this is a plan that we have to revise in future!" A depth of 1.1m with still three hours of low tide to go... Not good!

Fortunately, we all went through in matter of minutes and altered course to deeper water towards North East Middle.

We reached the notorious Spitway buoys with more worry of shallow water: 1.2m under the keel. Ah... the pleasures of sailing on the East Coast! After seven hours and 40 miles we finally logged out at the Nass. Welcome back to Mersea!

**Reflecting on the whole passage...**

Graduating from dinghy sailing or pottering around on a motor boat in the River Blackwater to crossing the North Sea, this has certainly been a challenge. We had taken the necessary RYA courses but this was now... for real! We logged 326Nm and had the chance to experience two types of crossing (the long hop and the shorter one). Although we found the coastal route between Dutch, Belgian and French ports can be tricky, they are well buoyed. We discovered several lovely spots abroad and shared some really fun time with the cruising "team".

GPS and electronic charts were most definitely of great help, but I also found that studying the route and waypoints, using the traditional chart, took away a lot of the worry: we knew where we were, the dangers nearby and understood the way traffic moves in the TSS. Flexibility (being prepared to postpone a trip because of bad weather and allowing for a back-up plan) has also been another important lesson for our future passage planning.

Our 17 days cruise was a great experience and has given us the confidence to carry on Cruising in Company. Well, as I am writing this, Malcolm is reading the "RYA Sail Trim Handbook for Cruisers", so watch this space!

**BRIGITTE TEXIER-PAUTON**  
*Just So*

# Suggestions

**F**or many years a suggestions book was maintained for use by members. Here is a selection from its pages. Older members may even recall some of these suggestions, and the responses.

**May 1929:** *That a board be provided in front of the rail - the said board to be drilled with holes of such a size as will comfortably accommodate an average half pint tumbler. This would save many broken glasses and (more important) much beer.*

**April 1936:** *That the Committee should seriously address itself to the question of holiday for those who minister to the comfort and convenience of members.*

**July 1936:** *Can canned peas be omitted at this time of year, and a variation from gooseberries be provided?*

*It rather depends on the weather, and the peas. Endeavours will be made to provide an alternative to gooseberries.*

**September 1936:** *That it is not reasonable to charge a member who sleeps in the club for a cold bath.*

*That the "club" should follow the custom of even the least expensive tea shops and not charge 3 pence for "extra jam" when an additional helping is asked for at "dinner".*

*But do tea shops give jam with dinner? (House Committee)*

**February 1937:** *That an alarm clock be available in the club for the benefit of members wishing to leave early on Monday mornings and also to ensure the staff having an aid to waking in addition to their natural inclination.*

**June 1939:** *That when the Secretary is put in the starting box an hour before the Sprite race starts the club dinghy be returned to the causeway.*

*This could easily be arranged if members would assist at the starting of races as per notice on notice board. (H Banks, Secretary)*

**August 1939:** *That Turkish and Egyptian cigarettes should be on sale for those who do not smoke Virginians.*

**June 1940:** *Suggest that the piano be locked up and the key lost.*

**July 1941:** *As a somewhat new member I do suggest that a 'wireless' be installed. This is suggested due to members of His Majesty's forces who visit this club often leave and proceed to another club where 'The News' can be heard at 6 and especially the 9 o'clock.*



**September 1947:** That a staple and hook be fitted on the front door and the Cannon removed, to avoid accidents.

**May 1949:** Suggest that we revert to Youngers Draught Beer instead of Wards which is very nasty and does not suit my liver.

The House Committee has considered this, and it is thought that the present source of draught beer is the best that we can manage .....Youngers is available in bottle for those who prefer it. Why not get a new liver?

**August 1950:** Suggest that members should be very punctilious about gear left in Members' Store. At the end of June a pair of sea-boots, one labelled, were left. Aug 26th the labelled boot only found (after search, Bill will corroborate). No use to anyone but a one-legged man...

**June 1953:** Is it not a grave reflection upon this modern age that after 3-4 hours hard work the bar closed before £3 worth of prize money could be consumed in terms of booze. Ichabod Ichabod (sic)

**November 1957:** Lectures: When these are announced for 8.30 it would be good manners to start at this time - not when the Commodore has done his dinner. (four signatures)

**December 1958:** That the (suggestion) book would be more useful if the Secretary remembered to take it to the meetings!

**February 1959:** In order to improve the sedate atmosphere of the bar it is suggested that an all-American juke box be installed. And how about an Espresso machine?

Rather ridiculous. (Hon Sec)

**October 1967:** We suggest that the club takes the Daily Telegraph and not the Times as their daily paper. The Times is seldom read but the Telegraph would be enjoyed by many (better yachting column!) also we suggest that Punch and Illustrated London News are stopped (these are never read anyway), and Playboy is brought in to replace them. This would appeal to a much wider audience. (Six signatories)

Put before House Committee and NOT AGREED; suggestion considered frivolous.

**November 1967:** It is suggested that the telephone should be raised and put inside the acoustic booth cover. Unfortunately the average member can only manipulate the telephone at the present time on his knees.

**May 1970:** Could the bar door to the conservatory be attended to by taking one plane and a pair of hands and removing a few shavings of wood. Perhaps it would then function as a proper door.

**June 1970:** To purchase a new suggestion book.

# House notes

My first year in this post was a challenging time but made easier with the support of an excellent House Committee and staff whose willing assistance at all times was invaluable and has been greatly appreciated.

As most members will be aware, we have had some changes in our team (or should I say 'crew') in several areas. Jo has settled in to her new role as General Manager, adjusting well to what initially must have been a difficult transition from a 5 star hotel and diplomatic embassy background to running a committee-led club. She is to be congratulated on this achievement and for her positive ideas for marketing the Long Room, overseeing and managing all events and for quickly getting to grips with the running of the Club. Vicki very quickly embraced her new position as Bar Supervisor and is constantly coming up with creative new promotional ideas and special offers which have resulted in good trading results for the bar. Julia successfully transferred to the office and has settled in to her new role very well to be of great assistance to Jo, Eddie and Gary. The kitchen 'crew' have continued to provide us with excellent food and have produced some encouraging trading results in what we predicted would be a difficult year.

There is continual activity in the form of improvements and ongoing maintenance to the Club, which never seems to stop, some of which is obvious and some of which is not. In the spring it was nice to see the

garden furniture refurbished and it will be put under cover this winter to hopefully maintain its lustre. The Boat Shed has had a long overdue renovation and looks magnificent in its new livery. The Long Room has been redecorated, the paintings rehung and visiting club burgees displayed on the overhead beam adding a nautical splash of colour. The disabled toilet downstairs has also been redecorated and a new polycarbonate roof has been installed over the storage and freezer area at the back of the kitchen.

A new cooker was installed in the Club flat but further refurbishment was put on hold when we were fortunate enough to obtain a long term tenant. Not only is it nice to have an occupant in the flat but the additional income is of course also welcome.

There was positive feedback to the new wine list when introduced earlier and members' suggestions and comments are always welcome, and are noted for consideration when the list is reviewed. The upgraded menu holders were also well received and whilst they are only small items, the wobbly tables in the bar area no longer wobble, the wall lights all have new shades and the bar and catering staff have new uniform shirts and name badges. We are continually striving to upgrade the services and facilities of the Club for the benefit of members.

For the future, plans for the conservatory on the side of the

Club are currently under consideration for refurbishment to create an improved coat facility and children's 'chill' area. Sound absorbing insulation is being sourced for the ceiling around the bar area and the wood floor in the same area is listed to be refinished. The weatherboard fascia on the front of the Club is also due for refurbishment and painting along with other projects when funds are allocated.

On the events side, a very successful and enjoyable Summer Party was held in July with an excellent BBQ surf and turf menu created by Eddie, 'Yachtopoly' entertainment in the Long Room and live music. 'Yachtopoly' was a fundraising activity for the Packing Shed Trust and we were pleased to hear from David Jarvis that more money was raised for the trust in these two hours than has ever been raised at an Open Day previously and with fewer volunteers required! Many Club members donated their winnings to the cause for which the Packing Shed Trust was extremely grateful – well done everyone! What wasn't so welcome was the downpour of heavy rain which the catering, bar and kitchen staff completely ignored and carried on serving customers regardless, becoming drenched in the process....very well done indeed.

The same Club staff plus the launch men also excelled themselves when the Old Gaffers Association turned up unannounced with 30 or 40 boats requesting moorings and if possible catering at the Club



for all the crews. Not only did Doug Seaden find them all a mooring but Eddie, Vicki and their respective teams made sure that they were all fed and watered! An excellent evening followed with sea shanties on the lawn and some very

satisfied visitors. A magnificent effort of which the Club should be proud.

As we approach the end of the year I would like to sincerely thank my fellow Flag Officers, all members of my House Committee, the General Manager and all the staff who

have helped me through my first year as Rear Commodore House. We have achieved a lot and have even more to do next year with the added excitement of the Summer Ball.

**MICHAEL WHEELER**  
Rear Commodore House



*Eddie, Gary and Millie*

# Life aboard the Committee Boat

With apologies to a hard working team



Photos by Tor Jackson



# New Members

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

## Full Members

David Cole  
(*Eleanora/Rose*)  
Stephen Crowe & Caroline  
Sydenham  
(*Byte*)  
Jack Davis  
(*Clockwise*)  
Terry Dowding  
(*Idle Jack*)  
Anthony Ebling  
Gordon Eckstein  
(*Albert Harry*)  
Michael Head  
(*French Mistress*)  
Rowland Hill  
Christine Lane  
(*Matilda*)  
Gordon Powell &  
Ruth Philo  
(*High Note*)  
Robert Sheil  
(*Gay Gannet*)  
Ben Van Dyke  
(*Suvretta*)  
Allen Vince  
(*Reasons to be Cheerful*)

## Honorary Life Members

Alan Morgan  
Josh Taylor

## Honorary Annual Members

Angela Payne

## Crew Members

William Head  
Georgina Vince

## Student Members

Sam Gosling  
Joseph Philo Powell

## Cadet Members

Hamish Eckstein  
Angus Eckstein  
Achala Matthews  
Harriet Philo Powell  
Phoebe Richardson  
Cedd Richardson  
Harriet Sunderland  
Sophie Sunderland  
Rosanna Tarleton

## Associate Members

Mandy Baines  
Brian & Joy Bond  
Sandy Davis  
(*Clockwise*)  
Bernadette Ebling  
Deborah Head  
(*French Mistress*)  
Samantha Hursey  
Angela Peppiatt  
Heather Taylor

# In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we have to report the following members died during the past year:

**Theresa Fitt** on Sunday 1st September 2013.

Theresa had been a member since 1984. Theresa's husband Peter was Commodore from 1994 until 1997.

**Rose Gosling** on 23rd June 2013.

Rose joined in January 1983. Members of her family still belong to the Club.

**John Say** peacefully on 9th May 2013.

John was a member from February 1987.

**David Sheen** on 12th November 2013. David, a member since 2008, was Commodore of the Leisure Owners Association and owner of *Sanderling*.

**Stephen Williams** peacefully in the early hours of Sunday 5th May 2013. Stephen was a past Club Bosun and owner of the beautiful Vale of York. He had been a member since July 1990.

**Pam Williams** peacefully on 1st August 2013.

Pam had been a member since 1951. Pam's husband was Commodore from 1966 until 1970.

**Martin Williams** on Thursday 24th October 2013. He joined the Club with his wife Gill in 1970. Martin was Honorary Treasurer from 1993 until 1997.

# Sailing Honours 2013

## **SCALLYWAG**

**Julian Lord**

1st Quest Trophy  
(Spring Series)

1st Halcyon Cup  
(Short Handed Series)

1st Knight Hall Trophy

1st Cirdan Trophy

1st Lewis Powell Cup

2nd Peter Vince Memorial Trophy

2nd Autumn Trophy

## **STELLA PEACOCK**

**Alan Jones**

1st Wallet Cup

2nd Blackwater Trophy

## **BUGSY**

**Geoff Hunt &**

**Sally-Anne Turnbull**

2nd Wallet Cup

3rd Coronation Challenge cup

3rd Halcyon Cup

(Short Handed Series)

## **OYSTER CATCHER XXX**

**Richard Matthews**

1st Buckley Goblet

1st 43rd Light Infantry Trophy

(Buckley Goblets)

1st Autumn Trophy

2nd Eora Plaque

2nd Centenary Cup

(Spring Series)

## **SURF AND TURF**

**Geoff Payne**

2nd Quest Trophy

(Spring Series)

2nd Lewis Powell Cup

3rd Cirdan Trophy

## **FIZZ**

**Ed Allen & Peter Rowe**

3rd Peter Vince Memorial Trophy

3rd Lewis Powell Cup

## **CARTE BLANCHE**

**Andy Head**

2nd Blackwater Trophy

(White Sail series)

## **GERONIMO**

**Owen Wheatley**

1st Coronation Cup

## **DARK & STORMY**

**Richard Bailey**

1st Eora Plaque

1st 26th AA Battalion RE Trophy

2nd Colonel's Trophy

2nd Lawson Trophy

(Buckley Goblets)

3rd Perkins Cup

(Pattinson Cup)

## **EVITA**

**Paul Gosling & Rob Smith**

2nd Halcyon Cup

(Short Handed Series)

2nd Cirdan Trophy

3rd Quest Trophy

(Spring Series)

## **BLACK ADDER**

**Richard & Sue Taylor**

1st Blackwater Trophy

2nd Finola Tankard

2nd Coronation Cup

## **JB'S 80**

**John Bolingbroke**

1st Peter Vince Memorial Trophy

## **RENDEVOUZ**

**Mike Berry**

3rd Wallet Cup

## **COMPLETE MADNESS**

**Paul Harrison**

3rd Centenary Cup

(Spring Series)

3rd Autumn Trophy

## **SPOT MARLEY**

**Steve Johnson**

1st Finola Tankard

## **TOUCAN**

**Ed Taylor**

2nd Ellis Cup

3rd Knight Hall Trophy

## **STARFALL II**

**John Clifton**

3rd Finola Tankard

## **SKYBIRD**

**Vic Prior**

3rd Blackwater Trophy

\*

## **Round the Island**

**Jack Grogan**

1st Coconut Trophy

**Ben Peter**

1st Reg White Trophy

\*

## **Ladies' Regatta Cruisers**

## **SCALLYWAG**

**Frances Meason**

1st Molliette Rose Bowl

## **BUGSY**

**Sally-Anne Turnbull**

1st Ambiance Trophy

3rd Molliette Rose Bowl

\*

## **Dinghies**

**Angela Payne**

1st Thornfleet Bowl

**Maddy Clifton**

2nd Thornfleet Bowl

**Lucy Struth**

3rd Thornfleet Bowl

\*

**Reeve Tyler trophy**

for best cruising log

**Brigitte Texier-Pauton**

**Carrington Cup**

for services to the Club

**Tim Wood**

# Stop Press

At the Laying-Up Supper on 23rd November the following awards were presented:

**Reeve Tyler Trophy** – Brigitte Texier-Pauton for best cruising log - her first crossing of the North Sea.

**Carrington Cup** – Tim Wood for services to the Club.