



molliette

The annual journal of the WEST MERSEA YACHT CLUB Founded 1899

December 2018



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Front cover: Kismet making a splash in the Med

Inside front: Becalmed brig. Picture by Chrissie Westgate

Molliette edited by: John Davison



Inside back: A Mersea Week coming together. Pcture by Chrissie Westgate

Back cover: Salcott scene . Picture by John Davison



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Printed by Printwize Witham

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Front cover: Kismet making a splash in the Med

Inside front: Becalmed brig. Picture by Chrissie Westgate

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From the Commodore

By Ian Shay

The outstanding feature of my first year as Commodore has been the amount of sunshine gracing both the water and the club lawn. While I can obviously take no credit for that, it has certainly made my job easier and more enjoyable as increasing numbers of members and guests have used the club's enviable facilities.

Early in the summer we held a very successful National 18s Championship, marking its 80th anniversary as a class. Entries came from England, Scotland, Ireland, the Isle of Man and France. We provided a full week of racing despite some challenging combinations of wind and tides. Ashore the entrants enjoyed a full social programme, which taxed our house staff to the full. Boy do the Irish know how to party!

This year there was also notable success for the club in EAORA events. Golden Fleece, skippered by Michael Wheeler, won the Houghton Cup and the Buckley Goblets outright. Congratulations to Michael and his crew.

Early in August we had our Cadet Week, this year themed 'We shall remember them'. Once again there were some testing conditions for our youngest sailors, but the encouragement and assistance they received from an army of volunteers was much appreciated.

Mersea Week started the wrong way, with all racing cancelled on the Sunday because of high winds. Things did settle down later in the week, but

conditions were challenging for the race officers and competitors alike. Eventually the sun did shine, leading to the pleasant sight of happy sailors on the club lawn. The brig fleet enjoyed a record number of entries, racing around 34 boats each day.

In an effort to change things around and refresh the event, the RNLI Pennant Race was held on the Wednesday of Mersea Week, rather than on a stand-alone date. This idea led to far more entries than last year. Some 28 cruisers and 20 dinghies and brigs turned out on the day despite heavy rain in the morning. Over £1,200 was raised for our local lifeboat.

Cruiser racing throughout the season did not always produce the number of entries to make for proper competitive sailing, especially in the local handicap fleet. Changes are being finalised for next year to try and encourage larger fleets.

The good summer weather has meant that full use has been made of the lawn and bar takings are up on last year as a result. Turnover is also up on the restaurant side.

The Midsummer party proved to be a successful and inexpensive replacement for the traditional summer ball this year.

The Moorings and Boatyard team have been able to let virtually all our moorings and the City Road winter storage facility will be full again this year. The late night launch service has again proved to be popular. Employing

part-time launchmen to support the full-time staff in this endeavour has, however, proved challenging.

Over the winter months a small team assisted by outside consultants completely redesigned the club website. I believe we now have a high quality and useful site which will last us for many years to come. At the same time the less glamorous but important task of writing the club's data protection policies to comply with extensive new legislation has been completed.

The year's activities have been ably supported by the flag officers and general committee, all of whom have worked tirelessly to bring us high quality events both on and off the water.

Very many thanks are also due to all our staff in the office, in the kitchen and front of house and on the water. They have all done their absolute best to give members an enjoyable time whenever they visit the club.

In conclusion I would invite you to reflect for a moment on how lucky we are to belong to a prestigious yacht club in a superb location. The WMYC continues to attract new members at a healthy rate at a time when some other clubs are failing. For the moment at least we remain viable, despite the rather uncertain economic outlook. Long may it continue.

A very Happy Christmas and great sailing in 2019 to you all.

Golden Fleece brings

By **Michael Wheeler**



Buckley Goblets winning crew at Ostend

Last year we entered *Golden Fleece* in a few East Anglian Offshore Racing Association (EAORA) races to stretch her legs, do what she does best and what Olin Stephens designed her for – long offshore racing. Having enjoyed some satisfactory results I sat down with our core crew and WMYC members Malcolm Clark, Philip Woods, Mike Berry, Julian French, Richard Sharpe (Ricardo) and Nick Reay and we decided to get a bit more serious about it for 2018. I knew that we could not compete in the entire EAORA series as I wanted to do Panerai British Classic Week in Cowes as well but we decided to give our best shot to those races that we could sign up for. Here is how the year played out.

First up was the Pattinson Cup on 5th May from Burnham to Mersea and Jason (our son) and Richard Fuller (Dickie) joined us for this. We were doing well in light to moderate conditions until Wallet No. 4 buoy which was the turning point to head back for Mersea. The skipper (me) tacked too early for the buoy with not

enough allowance made for the tide (impatient!), another crash tack just kept us off the buoy but allowed our rival *Fiskardo* to overhaul us. We clawed our way back on the leg to the Wallet Spitway and carried our spinnaker through the Spitway at eight knots which set us up to win our class.

The next day was the Ralph Herring Trophy from Mersea back to Burnham. With no wind and a delayed start we drifted over the line backwards at the gun! Eventually the sea breeze kicked in but it was light and did not last. At 55 miles the course was too long for the conditions and was not shortened. At 2030 we found ourselves still eight miles from the finish proceeding at 1.5kts over the ground against the ebb and so we traded in the sails for the machinery which enabled us to get to the bar at the Royal Burnham before it closed!

We missed the North Sea Race and so the next race for us was the Houghton Cup from Burnham back to Burnham on 27th May. Rosie Nunn, Patrick Campbell and Simon Chidgey were welcome additions to our core crew for this race. The 37 mile course consisted



of a four hour beat to windward followed by a spinnaker run back to the RBYC line. A nine inch rip in our genoa suffered at the start fortunately held until the windward mark but by the time we reached Barrow No. 4 it was 30 inches long and fraying badly. Once we had turned the corner we breathed a sigh of relief and flew the kite all the way home over a fast flowing ebb tide with Philip navigating to keep us in the shallows but off the mud! We were overhauled for a while by *Lyra of London* but managed to take the lead again at the entrance to the Crouch and held it all the way home ahead of *Woozle Hunter* to the RBYC line to take line honours, 1st in class and 1st overall by four minutes on corrected time. Vicki and Sue Berry joined us in Burnham - we partied hard that evening and Rosie and Patrick put on a dance routine worthy of 'Strictly'!

Next came the Suffolk Yacht Harbour

back the Goblets



Golden Fleece powered up at Panerai British Classic Week - Cowes

Classic Weekend on 9th/10th June with our usual Levington/Cowes crew of Jason, Dickie, Paul Adams (Biggles), Simon Chidgey (Chidge), Richard Cottey, Simon Evans, Ed Bull, Mark Stalabrax and Fiona Mickle. This is an event that we always enjoy but this year two things prevented us from being 'in the chocolates'. Firstly, we were awaiting delivery of a new genoa to replace the one torn in the Houghton Cup and so had to use the old one which was a good sail in its day but was now tired. Secondly, having only put the boat in the water with fresh antifouling just before the Pattinson Cup four-to-five weeks earlier, I thought that the bottom would still be clean – what a mistake that was! From that point on *Golden Fleece* was scrubbed before every race for the remainder of the season.

The EAORA Offshore Regatta was next for us and consisted of three races over

four days starting with the 75-mile Graham Wallis Trophy from Harwich to Ostend on Thursday 21st June. A downwind start in strong winds provided a colourful and exciting first leg. After seeing the number of broaches all around us we decided not to fly our kite just yet and sure enough some took theirs down. After Long Sand Head however we hoisted our favourite asymmetric for the 'drag race' across the North Sea, but with the wind building to 26kts plus and big seas it was stressful and required total concentration – we were going like a steam train! When gusts reached over 30kts, the order was given to drop it, but it was clear that I'd overcooked it and left it up too long. Things were now very difficult on the foredeck. When tripped, the sheet and guy clips sprung open under the sudden strain and the spinnaker flew horizontally by the halyard from the mast head like a paying-off pennant. Malcolm and Mike

suffered nasty rope burns and the pole and mast track were badly damaged. The sail was lost overboard and after trying to retrieve it for 30 minutes we reluctantly gave up and headed for Ostend. Not our best race, but even after losing all that time we finished ninth out of 12 boats on corrected time. Other boats suffered similar damage.

We enjoyed a welcome lay day in Ostend and started the 55-mile Cannon Ball Race from Ostend to Ramsgate on Saturday 23rd. Completely the opposite conditions today – little or no wind which is not good for *Golden Fleece*! We were forced to kedge and the race was shortened. We thought that under the circumstances we had done reasonably well but corrected time put us in sixth place out of 12.

The last race of the Offshore Regatta was the 48 mile Walker Challenge Cup



EAORA Offshore Regatta - Harwich to Ostend

on Sunday from Ramsgate back to Harwich in light to moderate winds. An enjoyable race in sunshine which would have been even better had we flown a spinnaker through Fisherman's Gat, but after Thursday's experience we were off spinnakers for a couple of days! Even so we were pleased to end up on the podium with a third place overall.

Next it was off to Cowes for Panerai British Classic Week from July 14th – 21st. We took delivery of the new asymmetric spinnaker and poles just in time and I enjoyed having John Hooper and Dee Prior onboard for the delivery from Mersea. Our regular Levington/ Cowes crew joined us in Cowes as they have done for the past eight years plus Robert Peace and Rob Brown from Cowes for 'local knowledge'. Vicki, Melissa and Karen Cottee came for the 'apres ski' and Karen kindly took care of the crew catering.

It was a fantastic week and it's doubtful that the conditions will be bettered for many years to come. Fifty beautiful classic yachts, amazing

weather, brisk winds and good results – what more could you wish for?

There were several S&S boats in the regatta and we always enjoy a tussle with *Opposition* (ex Ted Heath's *Morning Cloud*) and almost identical to *Golden Fleece*. We were both in Class 2 and battling it out throughout the week. Our most rewarding race was the 30-mile Nab Tower Race with conditions that *Golden Fleece* loved in 16kts-20kts of wind. We carried the spinnaker all the way to the Tower which looked very threatening as we closed it with heavy confused seas and a fast flowing tide. It was a good race for us and we were rewarded with a class result of first.

The most nail-biting moments of the week were during the start of Friday's race. There was plenty of wind, about 17kts from just south of east, a fleet start with 47 boats on the Squadron line all jockeying for pole position to start on starboard towards the east and as close to the inner limit mark as possible, just yards from the shore beneath the Castle – we were one of

them! As the seconds ticked down to the gun a gap opened up for us and we got a cracking start right on the line, only to get another gun a few seconds later for a general recall. 'Oh no,' I thought, 'I'll never get another start like that!' It takes quite some time to get 47 boats back for another start, but eventually we were all there again doing the same thing. Total concentration was required just to keep out of trouble with big classic yachts like fine pieces of antique furniture manoeuvring at speed within a few metres or even feet of each other. There was a big risk of the inevitable happening – and it did! I heard the shouting first and then the crunch of mahogany and teak splintering as a beautiful 50ft Spirit yacht was t-boned by another yacht just a few yards from us! I didn't look, there was too much going on around us and more by luck than judgement we managed another great start but not quite as good as the first one, only to hear a second gun for the another general recall. Nobody wanted to believe it and I can't repeat what was said onboard! As the clock ticked down again for the third start in the same congested conditions my mouth was dry and my knuckles white on the wheel. As we approached the line at speed I was thinking 'If we don't hit another boat we'll probably be over the line' but we got away with it and were off to another good start – this time no recall. I can't remember what happened during the rest of the race, I think we came fourth, but I hope I never have to go through a start sequence like that again.

Additionally we achieved fourth place in races 1, 4 & 6 and ended the week third in class 2, only 2 points behind *Opposition*. Two other Mersea boats also achieved excellent results with Richard Mathew's *Kismet* finishing second in Class 3 and Scot Yeates's *Stiletto* third. A good show for Mersea and the WMYC.

After delivering the boat back from Cowes and a busy summer we only signed up for three days of Mersea Week – the RNLI Pennant Race on Wednesday 29th August which Geoff Hunt, Sally-Anne Turnbull and Vicki joined us for and in which we won our class, the WMYC Regatta on Friday and the Town Regatta on Saturday. On

Friday we were leading the fleet in our class when the skipper (yours truly) took a wrong turn at a mark and sailed the wrong course! As soon as we realised we turned around to try and catch up but it was too late. There were three boats in our race – we came third. That cost me an extra round of beers in the Club! We didn't make the same mistake the next day in the Town Regatta and won our class for the RIIS Trophy for the second time, which we were very pleased about as the late Pat and Ted Fellows who used to own *RIIS* were great friends of our family and we spent many happy times on her with them.



Buckley Goblets Race: scooping up the North Sea

There were 12 races in the EAORA season with seven to count for the championship. We had already missed three and participating in Panerai British Classic Week meant that we missed another two races, reducing our chances considerably of achieving the best overall season's results. But there was still one race left – The Buckley Goblets.

The forecast was not particularly favourable for us, westerly 8-10kts (we could do with more wind than that) which was pretty much how it was when Brian and Wendy started us downwind at the Nass at 07.00 on Friday September 14th for the 90-mile race to Ostend. Onboard were Jason Wheeler, Philip Woods, Richard Sharpe, Tim Turnbull, Richard Fuller, Paul Adams and yours truly. We carried the spinnaker all the way to the NE Gunfleet but it became very shy as we approached the buoy. We were 'by the lee' and had to really work hard to avoid gybing and keep it flying for the last three or four hundred yards. As soon as we were round we headed for Long Sand Head, the kite filled and we were away. The wind built and was gusting over 20kts as we crossed the North Sea, more than was forecast, but we were in control and were stomping along. Some boats headed north and some south but we still had over 50 miles to go and Philip gave us a course heading for a point about five miles south of Ostend to allow for what would be a strong north flowing tide as we approached the coast. This worked well but even so we had to head up a bit more as we got closer and changed from the spinnaker to the new asymmetric which had replaced the one we lost on our previous race to

Ostend in June. We were pleased to have Tim Turnbull with us on this race as at least we would have a medical professional on board should it be necessary! Eventually the wind angle became too tight even for the asymmetric and so we dropped it for the last few miles in favour of the genoa – and without the loss of hardly any speed. We were really going now and were surfing down some waves, it was hard work on the wheel and the foot of the genoa was scooping up huge volumes of the North Sea. Philip's navigation was spot on, we rounded the Buitenstroombank Buoy and headed for the finish line crossing it at 18h 27m 55s BST – eleven-and-a-half hours after starting. On corrected time we were 7m 18s ahead of *Xray*. Our average speed was 7.8kts and we maxed out at 13.4kts. Not fast by modern standards but very respectable for a 44-year old lady and it was enough to win first in class, first overall and place us fourth overall for the EAORA season. Most importantly we

brought the Buckley Goblets back to the West Mersea Yacht Club – which we were delighted to do. It was an exhilarating but exhausting race.

Possibly as a result of some of this season's race results, *Golden Fleece* has been nominated by the Sparkman & Stephens Association for their Global Challenge Cup, awarded to the S&S yacht that has secured a class or overall win by the greatest percentage corrected time margin relative to the next placed yacht. The final result will be announced at the S&S Association AGM in February.

Campaigning a boat for so many races during our short season requires a lot of co-ordination and crew support as not everybody can do every race. All in all we had 24 crew members racing and/or delivering *Golden Fleece* at different times throughout the season and I would like to thank each and every one of them, and their partners, for their support and co-operation.

Results

Pattinson Cup – EAORA	1st in class
Houghton Cup – EAORA	1st in class 1st overall
Walker Challenge Cup – EAORA	3rd overall
Panerai British Classic Week – Cowes	1st in class Nab Tower Race
Panerai British Classic Week – Cowes	3rd in class for week
Panerai British Classic Week – Cowes	4th in class Races 1, 4 & 6
RNLI Pennant Race – WMYC	1st in class
West Mersea Town Regatta	1st in class
Buckley Goblets – EAORA	1st in class 1st overall
EAORA Season Championship	4th overall
EAORA Plaque – WMYC	
Sparkman & Stephens Global Challenge Trophy	Nomination

A load of Goblets!

By **Alan Jones**

*There is a skipper called Munsey,
At the bar said wouldn't it be funsey,
To crew up 'Dark Horse', (With racers of course),
And compete for the Buckley Goblets.*

*So, the day of the Race did dawn,
And at 05.30 we met on the Lawn.
On the launch to the Quarters we went,
Racing sails to mast were soon bent.*

*With bacon sizzling below,
the engine was a'go.
But with bacon filling a bap,
The engine made a loud zap,
Thick smoke filled the air, what despair,
Our plans for a race stopped there.*

*The starter was found at fault,
its wires had a short,
As the start gun went bang,
on our phones we rang,
To find a replacement starter.*

*Munsey shot off to Harwich,
where in a store one sat in stowage,
By one it was fitted, the boat was fully kitted,
So, do we unload, go home, defeat admitted?*

*At 1.30 we set sail, our plan couldn't fail,
We would follow the fleet on their tail.
Throu' the Spitway and up the Swin',
Our race we were sure to win,
'Cause no was there to beat us!*

*Throu' the day we flew the new kite,
Which really was a delight.
At dusk she came down without a frown,
Which saved a fright in the night.*

*We cheered at the Binnenstroombank buoy
(with no finish boat to shout ahoy).
Entering harbour, we thought we'd rather,
drop main inside it'd be less harder,
where seas were smooth and calm.
Unlike that morn' the starter jointed,
As up to wind the boat was pointed.*



Jones the bard at the wheel



Clockwise from above:
A reminder of headaches and blocked heads.

The wayward starter motor.

The errant jib sheet.



*Down came the main and just that mo',
the engine stopped and wouldn't go.
Yes, you guessed a wayward sheet,
used the prop as a cleat.
The leeward wall was ever near,
but there was no fear.
As jib was hoisted and Munsey steer(ed),
The inner harbour welcomed us near.*

*Shipshape and tidy and although tired,
a hefty nightcap was required.
At noon our cheers wouldn't cease,
when the Goblets were won by Golden Fleece.*

*The North Sea Yachtie fulfilled it's role,
serving excellent Dover Sole.
The intrepid five cast off again,
the crossing was good, but the Wallet a pain.
Frenchy's singing was sweet on the ear,
as he took to the helm in all-weather gear.
The final insult before we docked,
would you believe it? the heads were blocked!*

*Would I again?, yes indeed,
with shipmates like these that's all one needs.*

*Dark Horse is a Camper & Nicholson 43 owned and
skipped by John Munns.*



Dark Horse in Ostend



Crew mates, Jon French, John Munns, John Cook and Tim Hurst



Jon French, the singing helmsman



Munsey's moment of truth

Still in the Baltic with

By **Ian Low** – winner of this year's Reeve Tyler Trophy for best cruising log



A typical Swedish channel through rocks and islands.

We all know that a passage recorded in the ship's log should begin with 'From' the port you are leaving and 'Towards' the port you hope to reach. As opposed to 'To', which assumes that you will definitely get there. So when our spreadsheet for *Colette's* second year in the Baltic showed us arriving back in Mersea Quarters around 12th September, and the column for method of transport to and from the boat glibly stated "Club Launch", we were clearly tempting fate.

Let's be realistic here. The reason more Brits don't go sailing in the Baltic isn't because they can't face the lovely scenery, the stunning capital cities or the friendly natives. It's because the return journey into prevailing south westerly's can on many occasions be a problem. So we never did catch the club launch this year. *Colette* is not on her mooring in Salcott, nor in Victory Boatyard. Rather, after two amazing summers, 5000 miles of sailing (or motoring), 122 different harbours and 30 different crew, she is sitting in a yard in Germany. The spreadsheet that ran our onboard lives like a well oiled

machine for two years all came unravelled from about 7th September, but more of that anon – first of all let's talk about the good four months of 2018.

Colette is a Beneteau Oceanis 361, shared by David Ewart-James (Chappie to most on Mersea) and myself. The story of her first year to, and in, the Baltic was recounted in last year's *Molliette*. We had left *Colette* in Navekvarn, 60 miles south of Stockholm and 10 miles from Skavsta (Ryanair's Stockholm airport) in a yard belonging to Swedeport Marine,

Colette



owned and run by Michael Melaniker. The yard looked after her splendidly and it was simply a great place to winter – we recommend it.

This season began with Pauline and I doing a 900-mile road trip out there, leaving Mersea in mid-May. Over eight days we took in Lubeck, Copenhagen and Stockholm, lots of German road works and acres of lovely Danish and Swedish countryside. As well as a great trip it was a good way of getting lots of boat stuff out there and with the food and drink we took with us it was more than financially viable. P returned

home by plane, Chaps, Richard and Simon flew out and after three days *Colette* was in the water, stocked up and ready to sail. Having a car made a big difference. For example, almost the only place in the Baltic where you can get English gas bottles refilled is in Nykoping and you need a car to get there. I know a number of friends who manage without a car, but they have been doing it longer and are probably more organised.

On Thursday 24th May we set sail down the east coast of Sweden, but only until we were opposite Gotland and then we turned eastwards. Part One of this summer, without going into a port by port account, was basically an anti-clockwise tour of the northern Baltic taking in Latvia, Estonia, Finland and the Alland Islands before returning to Sweden and the Stockholm archipelago. I was for seven weeks hopelessly outnumbered by Ewart-James's - ie Chappie's - family. But, hey, I survived and we had a lot of fun. Impressions? It was hot and dry and continued so through most of the summer. Place after place told us it was the hottest, driest etc since records began - fantastic for ice-cream and beer sellers, not so good for farms and forestry. Speaking of the latter, there are a lot of trees in this part of the world. They've been making matches, telegraph poles and flat-packed furniture for a long time and they have not run out yet. The scenery is lovely, the rocks and narrow channels scary, but the buoyage is hard to fault. When our Garmin chart plotter died we did it all with Navionics on tablets, backed up by paper charts where we faithfully moved little sticky arrows on every 10 minutes, so we could see at a glance where we were.

The one place we opted out of was St Petersburg. We came out of Tallinn and headed due north into Helsinki, when we could have turned right to Russia. Some brave people have done it, but

we had heard so many horror stories of bureaucracy, corruption and general nastiness to one-off small boats that we chickened out. Go in a flotilla or on a cruise ship, was our attitude, when you have a bit of strength in numbers. Anyway does the guy in charge over there even like us?

Talking of which, the delightful city tour guide in Tallinn told us Estonia has been invaded by just about every country in the area over the last thousand years and has only been independent twice - once from 1920 until 1939 and again from 1990 until today. She told us that she checks the flag outside the Parliament building each day to make sure the country hasn't been invaded again! It seemed such a plucky, dynamic little country with a can-do attitude. We hope they prosper. On a similar theme we talked to people quite a bit about defence and they are spending serious money on it, at last. They now realise the "peace dividend" of the 1990s was an illusion and there are still some big bad guys out there. On a more cheerful note there were so many lovely places and great memories.

But the Stockholm archipelago is to die for. It was summed up so well by a young Swedish harbourmaster who told us, in an Australian accent, that she had travelled widely but there is nowhere in the world she would rather spend the summer. Cities were an important highlight of our two-year trip. We sailed into Riga, Tallinn, Helsinki, Mariehamn (capital of the Alland islands), Stockholm and Copenhagen, and got the bus into Oslo - all were well worth visiting. We had visited Stockholm in 2017 and were more than happy to take a new crew there this year, even more so when we found it coincided with the start from the harbour of the Round Gotland Race. What a stunning start line! It is their equivalent of the Fastnet and finishes in Sandhamn – Sweden's

Cowes. After that we headed south via Lake Malaren and back to Navekvarn, where they kindly let us leave the boat for three weeks, the crew flew home and Chaps and I drove the 900 miles back to Mersea (rather quicker than the trip out). The crew for this first seven weeks was: Richard Bishop and Simon, Mady, Rosie and Alan Ewart-James, along with Chaps and myself.

And so to Summer 18, Part Two. Really it was five very social weeks, but with some fairly serious mileages with four wonderful crews. First the boys trip – Alan, James and Nick. Then the youngsters’ trip – Miriam, James, Cath and Roy (all related to me). The Mersea friends trip – Penny, Richard, Anne and Pauline. And finally the old friends trip – Eunice, Richard and again Pauline. During this period we went down the East coast of Sweden, round the bottom and across to Bornholm, on to Copenhagen, through some of the Danish islands and up the coast of Jutland.

Highlights, again too many to mention, but must name a few. Bornholm, the classic holiday island, delightfully Danish - go there if you get a chance by plane, ferry or even sail there. Copenhagen, the Danes come across as friendly, relaxed and stylish and so is their capital. Plus a sailing highlight,

they happen to me every now and then. We had, shall we say, an engine malfunction in that we weren’t confident it would run. At the time we were on a very small remote island, but the wind was south westerly and we were going north up the Lilla Belt and so were in the lee of Jutland. We motored 100 yards out of Lyo harbour, got the sails up and, in a force 5 to 6 wind, broad-reached 68 miles to Vejle in Jutland - averaging 7.1 kts (which for those who know *Colette* is quite a good average over a nine-hour period). Then we dropped the sails and motored the last few hundred yards into the marina, we could have sailed but wanted to test the engine! One of the lasting memories of Denmark is the party atmosphere – every harbour we went into seemed to have live music, a Harbour Fest, the first one coincided with my birthday so I thought the boys had laid it on specially, but then it was everywhere we went. What a lovely way to spend a summer.

And so to the epilogue. The last of the summer crews left on Ryanair out of Aarhus. I should just mention Ryanair, because between us all over two years we have taken some 70 flights with them and one person on one flight was delayed, the rest were fine. Yes its cattle class and yes it’s the airline we all love to hate, but it does what it says

on the tin - it’s cheap and no other airline has the coverage of the Baltic that it has. We literally could not have done the trip the way we did without them.

Back to the story. Nick and Colin arrived as delivery crew back to Mersea with Chaps and me. This was where I had perhaps been a tad ambitious for what was now well into September. We were planning to exit the west end of the Lymfjord at Thyboron on the Jutland peninsula and cruise serenely 400 miles back to Mersea. Well, we sat in the fjord for some time with pretty strong westerly’s blowing (there is some lively discussion on the Cruising Associations website about leaving that coast in strong westerly’s) then decided to run back down the east coast of Jutland. Yes, I know, the coast I had spent three weeks sailing up. We made the 200 miles to Kiel in three days, one of which we were storm bound and didn’t move. Arriving in Kiel on 11th September, we found that the small weather window which would have allowed us to get down the Elbe and along the German and Dutch Friesian islands had gone. To use a nautical term, we were stuffed. We would have got back eventually by skittering around into the Dutch canals, but once you are in there it is slow progress and Chaps had to get



Helsinki Yacht Club



Bornholm Harbour

home for an exotic holiday. I was also starting to get cabin fever after too long away from home and as for the crew; they just had their smart phones on airline booking sites! So the final roll of the dice for *Colette* in 2018 was to find her a local yard.

Well, lifting out in Germany, for us, was what you might call a 'different' experience - and we have wintered in both France and Sweden so were not foreign lift-out virgins. The first two yards I rang put the phone down on me, explaining that planning for lift out was normally done a year in advance. The third, at Rensburg on the Kiel Canal, gave us a chink of hope but the lady there said we must speak to her mother, who was back tomorrow. So the next morning Chaps and I unceremoniously dumped our crew on the dockside and headed into and along the canal from where I rang Yacht Services Schreiber, explaining to Frau Schreiber that we wanted to lift-out for the winter, maybe tomorrow if not today. 'I am not McDonalds' was the immortal response, followed by: 'How do I know you are not bringing me your old sofa?' From this we understood that the Germans like to do everything in a planned and orderly manner and the 'old sofa' reference was to people who took old boats there for storage and then

disappeared. To cut a long story short, diplomacy of the highest order was called for, insurance policies were rewritten and contracts signed. Comments like: 'We did it on a handshake in Sweden and lifted the next day,' were met by 'I am not Sweden'. Anyway the yard was unbelievably efficient, lifting close on 400 boats and with 22,000 square metres of inside storage and acres of outside concrete. The daughter who ran the office was charming, the guys in the yard were very friendly and good at their jobs, and after three days we did get lifted. We even got a smile out of Frau Schreiber. Efficient yes, but flexibility does not appear to come naturally there. Rules are not made to be broken.

So there *Colette* sits until the spring, when we hope to find her in as fine a condition as after her Swedish winter. The plan had been a quiet 2019 here on the East Coast, but I guess we will just slot in a trip to Helgoland and a few weeks on the Dutch inland waterways first – winds, of course, permitting.

It has been quite a two years. I've missed family and Mersea hugely, but it has been an incredible trip and when I look back at some 1,000 photos I have to pinch myself that we did it. I think Chaps and I would agree that we would have struggled without each other's support and whilst the places were memorable, our biggest thanks go to all the crew – they made it happen.



England V Sweden World Cup Match

From mud to Med

– a Classic saga

By **Richard Matthews**

2018 marked the 120th anniversary of *Kismet*, our beautifully restored 50-foot Fife yacht, which in a previous life been a West Mersea houseboat. To celebrate the occasion we decided to take her to the South of France to compete in the famous, and glamorous, series of classic regattas.

We'd been there before - in 2010 following *Kimet's* re-launch (see side story). While we enjoyed the racing at Nice, Cannes and St Tropez, and did win one passage race, the boat was largely uncompetitive under the CIM French classic yacht rating system.

So this time we decided to be much better prepared for more speed and with a more competitive CIM rating. My friend John Caulcutt, co-owner of the 120ft Fife *Mariquita*, put me in touch with French classic rating consultant Guy Ribadeau-Dumas, who we flew to Cowes during the Panerai Regatta in June. He checked *Kismet* and provided the advice we needed.

There was a lot to do. Some of his advice included no winches, no furling gear, no radial cut sails, each of which save about two per cent of elapsed time. We also opted to sail without a topsail, which was probably a step too far for the light conditions.

We optimised our jib and spinnaker hoist positions and made the inner forestay removable to speed up tacking our overlapping headsails. The diameter of the mast was trimmed to achieve a 22 per cent weight reduction aloft and we cut down the spreaders from 140mm to 90mm - enabling our 125 per cent overlapping jib to be fully sheeted upwind. We also fitted a new, flatter-cut mainsail and cross-cut 0.75oz light chute. The potential problem of racing a 50-footer without winches was largely overcome by the use of handybillies, probably more or less as used originally as sheet winches didn't exist in 1898.

With all adjustments made, *Kismet* was taken by road to Antibes, re-



commissioned and then taken on to the Regates Royales Cannes. There we had a good breeze and were able to carry our sail even better than we'd hoped. A combination of speed and rating made us very competitive in a 20-yacht fleet, with a first and second in two races. In race three the wind stayed stubbornly below eight knots making us wish we hadn't taken off the topsail. However we were very happy with an overall second in class.

The Yacht Club de France traditionally runs a fleet race from Cannes to St Tropez for the start of the Voile regatta. A fleet of almost 100 classic yachts started in light conditions and hampered by waves from numerous spectator boats. *Kismet* had a good boat-for-boat race along the coast with two similarly sized Fifes, *Eva* and *Viola*, while the larger yachts went further offshore looking for wind. The fleet stalled at the entrance to the Bay of St



WMYC crew members Jamie Bolingbroke, Paul Harrison, Richard Matthews and Saskia Clark



Kismet hard on the wind, Gstaad Yacht Club Centenary Trophy - St Tropez

Tropez, when a new breeze filled in from astern, helping *Kismet* to finish close behind our higher-rated rivals and win overall - collecting the Coupe d'Automne trophy.

With an understanding of our potential weakness in light airs there was one more card to play. Racing under local handicap in the UK, *Kismet* had a huge overlapping reacher set on a spinnaker halyard with a furler. We nicknamed this sail the 'wompa', a name that anyone who has seen the movie 'Wind' is sure to recognise. A call to our sailmaker Dolphin on Saturday established the viability of cutting this sail down and turning it into a light 150 per cent overlapper on hanks for our new downsized CIM rating sail plan. The sail was on the loft floor by 09.00 Monday and with some frenzied work Dolphin had the sail modified, re-sized and in a car by 14.30 to Gatwick in time to hand deliver to crewman

Andy Green, who was flying into St Tropez that evening.

In St Tropez, we had the unique opportunity of racing in a special 20-strong Fife class. A stunning fleet by any standards, *Kismet* was one of the smaller participants racing against several 100-foot plus yachts, including *Moonbeam* and the magnificent 133-foot *Cambria*, on which I once had the privilege to sail as tactician in the Antigua Classic Regatta. The class included three 15 Metre class yachts, including *Hispania* - another beautifully restored ex-West Mersea houseboat. Armed with our new 150 per cent genoa we did show a little more speed in very light winds and ended the regatta third overall, with which we were very happy.

Midway through the Voile St Tropez, the Gstaad Yacht Club ran a special pursuit race for yachts over 100 years

old. Nineteen yachts started, but as forecast, the wind increased rather quickly to 20-25kts gusting 30 with large 14 to 18-foot seas at the windward mark. The changing conditions created the most challenging race of our campaign. To get through, we had to remove the inner forestay, set the staysail, drop the 120 per cent overlapper, set the jib and then lower the staysail - all in a nonstop sequence! The crew did a brilliant job and we rounded the weather mark in conditions that by this time were well above our limits and flying from wave top to wave top.

On the run back to St Tropez we were being closed down quickly by two larger yachts, the first of which chose a 360 degree turn in preference to attempting a gybe and fell astern. The pursuing yacht gybed like us and was closing fast so we set our heavy spinnaker, the only yacht to do so, and

pulled away again to take second place. Ten of the 19 starters retired. The Gstaad Yacht Club evening reception was, to us simpletons, like something out of a fashion show. Denette surmised, probably correctly, that most of these fashionistas had never been anywhere near a yacht.

I must pay a big a tribute to our crew of nine, who were absolutely fantastic. WMYC members Paul Harrison and Jamie Bolingbroke both joined the *Kismet* swimming club by falling over the side (easy to do with low freeboard and no guard rails) but both happily hung on tight and climbed back aboard. Andy Green, a former WMYC cadet now a professional yacht race commentator living in Newport, Rhode Island, was also aboard. Saskia Clark, West Mersea's own golden girl, sailed as tactician. I don't think we could have sailed *Kismet* any better.

But the drama wasn't quite over. On the return road trip to the UK, about 30 miles from Calais, the truck driver left his load unattended, he said for about 10 minutes. However, it was long enough for 10 illegal immigrants to board *Kismet*, hide below and get stuck into our stash of Cotes de Provence Rose. They were picked up in Calais by UK Border Force and the trucker is now facing a £12,000 fine. Not checking the load before moving may be an expensive mistake.

Now we have *Kismet* going so well we are tempted to return to the South of France next year. Time will tell.

Finally, did Nelson really say 'kiss me Hardy' as he lay mortally wounded on the deck of *HMS Victory*? Our crew think '*Kismet*', meaning fate, was the more likely quotation.



***Kismet* at full throttle**



***Kismet* in the Mersea mud and during re-fit**

Kismet was designed and built in Scotland by the second William Fife in 1898. It's amazing to think that Queen Victoria was on the throne when she was launched.

Along with many other yachts, *Kismet* was laid up in a mud berth at West Mersea at the outbreak of WW2 and with the addition of a beach hut sized shed she later became a houseboat.

My *Kismet* story began in 2004 when we commissioned *Pirette*, a 27ft half decked Fife believed to have been a quarter scale forerunner for Sir Thomas Lipton's *Shamrock*, restored for me by my friend Adrian Wombwell. Adrian had a chalk board in his Tollesbury workshop showing 'next project *Kismet*?'. I had no knowledge of the boat until Adrian pointed out that beneath the shed, and tattered exterior, there was a shapely Fife racing yacht.

In 2004 a deal was done with *Kismet*'s owner, ex-Wyatts shipwright Dick Gladwell, who had lived aboard with his family for close to 50 years. By this stage *Kismet* was in near-wreck condition. Having dug her out of the mud it was touch and go as to whether she would disintegrate when craned onto transport to get her across to Tollesbury.

The plan was for a two-man two-year restoration, whereas in practice the work took four men five years! Ignorance is bliss and we got well



beyond the point of no return before we came to appreciate the scale of the project.

Kismet had her stern severely damaged by an unexploded German bomb during the war, which had been very poorly repaired and her transom had sagged by almost a foot. Her lead keel had been recycled for ammunition and all her deck gear was long gone. So we had little or no knowledge of her keel, rudder, sail plan or rigging. My friend David Cooper, a partner in the design firm Holman and Pye, provided technical support and skillfully recreated a lines plan and designs for the missing elements.

Kismet was re-launched in 2010 in close to new condition.



Shapely lines on show at re-launch

...and those other seven regattas

For the Caribbean regatta season we sailed a Judel Vrolijk designed HH42, built and owned by Hudson Marine in China. Named *Power of Love* she was on loan from her Chinese builder, who had shipped her as a stock boat to the USA where she had remained unsold.

We shipped her from Newport to Antigua and participated in the Heineken Regatta in St Maarten, the Voile St Barth's and Antigua Sailing Week. We had won two of these events last season with *Oystercatcher*, but soon discovered that the Caribbean Sailing Association (CSA) rule wasn't kind to our extreme carbon racer and we didn't come close to being able to sail to our rating. Which was a pity, because under IRC we had great results with our 42 which went on to win RORC Class 1 last year.

All these Caribbean races are great fun and well run, none more so than the Voile St Barth's, with fabulous racing around the outlying islands. Jimmy Buffet put on an impromptu concert for free during one happy hour, and

every yacht was given a chilled magnum of champagne after crossing the finishing line on the final race – how's that for style?

Back in the UK we did the Round the Island race in *Oystercatcher XXXI*, in light and shifty conditions. Once around the Needles we carried an asymmetric spinnaker for eight hours non-stop, getting three quarters of the way around the island. A series of good tactical calls had us right up at the front of the fleet and despite our modest 39 feet we were the sixth boat to finish, with 1,141 astern, and a useful second overall in IRC Zero.

We took *Kismet* to Cowes for the Panerai Classic Regatta and racing under IRC were well pleased with a second in class. No shame coming second to Gio Belgrano's *Whooper*, a recent Around the Island overall winner and overall winner of this regatta for the last two years.

Back aboard *Oystercatcher XXXI* for Ramsgate Week and an overall win in

the Around the Goodwins, then on to Cowes Week where we managed two podium results in four races, retiring from the final Friday race when the wind gusted to 30-plus knots and our mainsail started showing signs of imminent disintegration. Our soon to be new German owner was aboard and by Saturday morning I left with my personal gear and a bag of money, while he sailed for Kiel with the boat!

Finally to Mersea Week, to join the growing Cork 1720 fleet with the recently purchased *Decoy*. We did well, winning our class, and enjoyed some close racing in what we all hope will become an established fleet here in West Mersea. During 2018 we sailed nine regattas in five countries and in four different classes, all in all another great year of sailing thanks to a loyal and increasingly capable crew.

In 2019 we are planning to ship *Crusader* to the USA for the 12 Metre World Championship and the New York Yacht Club's 175th Anniversary Regatta in Newport, Rhode Island.

Oystercatcher in the Round the Island Race



Photo by James Tomlinson

Mersea Life Boat

By **Martin Wade**, Lifeboat Operations Manager

Being a charity, the RNLI relies heavily upon donations and legacies for its funds. There are also the RNLI shops, such as the small one in our station, which earn a considerable sum nationally. Here in West Mersea we are well supported locally on the river with various clubs and marinas holding fundraising events, including of course the West Mersea Yacht Club's annual RNLI Pursuit Race.

Indeed we see some extraordinary fundraising endeavours. A notable event this year was a retired husband and wife visiting every one of the 238 lifeboat stations in the UK and Ireland in their Porsche 911 - in just 911 hours! They only allowed 15 minutes at each station for greetings and some stretching exercises.

I guess many readers will have watched the BBC series 'Saving Lives At Sea'. Mersea lifeboat was featured three times in the latest series and the film crew spent four days in Mersea recording interviews with the crew. Viewing figures were about 1.5 million for each episode.

Apologies for the low quality of some of the pictures here, as they are frame grabs from video footage. You will appreciate that we don't usually have time to stand about taking photos during a rescue, but the video cameras are often running!

As the ship 'Ross Revenge' (aka Radio Caroline) is moored in the river with the public being taken out for visits, the lifeboat crew thought they should have a good look at the layout of the ship so that in the event of an accident we would know access and extraction routes. Most of the crew visited the ship by lifeboat and launch while broadcasting was in progress.

We are not called to rescue many kite



Picture by: Leafy Dumas

Louis Grover from Blast ('Saving Lives..') with senior helmsman Matthew Haward

surfers, as their competency level is generally very high, as was this young man's. But accidents do happen. While kite surfing in January off the Mersea front on a gusty day, he lost control of the kite and when in the water managed to get his lines into a massive tangle around one ankle, preventing him swimming or re-flying the kite. Fortunately he had a friend surfing with him who went ashore to call the Coastguard for help. Our lifeboat was with him very quickly, which was a good thing - for although he was well dressed for the cold water, he had been in it for 90 minutes.

Early in February with a north west force 5 blowing, we were called to a capsized Wayfarer in Steeple Bay with three males aboard. The centreboard was broken and the mast stuck in mud. They had managed to swim ashore to Osea, but the eldest man had been in the water for 40 minutes

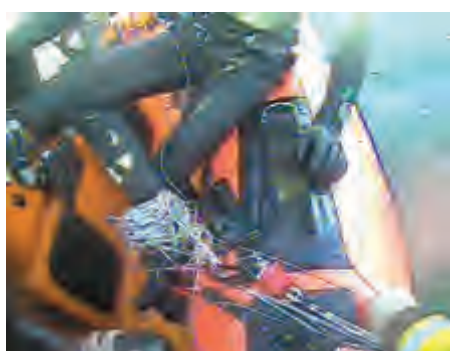
and had swallowed sea water. They were found by workmen on the island and the eldest man was taken to a house for warming. The lifeboat was requested because it was high tide and the Osea Island causeway was covered. On arrival at Osea, two crew members went ashore with medical kit to the casualty. The other two casualties were taken on the lifeboat to Marconi Sailing Club where a Coastguard team and ambulance met them. Two paramedics were then taken to Osea. It was decided that the casualty was too poorly to move by lifeboat, so the Coastguard rescue helicopter was requested, which arrived after 30 minutes. The lifeboat crew and paramedics spent about one hour with the casualty before he was airlifted to Colchester Hospital. The lifeboat went to investigate the Wayfarer, but it could not be moved due to its mast being still in the mud, so it was left to be recovered at low tide.

In July a windsurfer was reported in difficulties with a broken rig in Goldhanger Creek area. Conditions were quite rough with a force 5-6 wind over tide. The casualty was located with guidance from other windsurfers. The male casualty and his gear were taken on board the lifeboat and landed safely ashore at the Marconi sailing club, where he had come from.



Crew visits *Ross Revenge*

While speedboats may not be the favourite craft on the water, you can't help feeling sorry for this chap. His speedboat broke down off Bradwell and the lifeboat towed him back to Mill Beach. He had the engine repaired and three weeks after his breakdown he connected the battery to start the engine on his mooring at Mill Beach and the whole thing went up in flames. Lifeboats do not and are not equipped to put out fires, but we were called to assist the Fire Service by pulling the boat into the shore for them to deal with.



Saving lives at sea



These are just a few examples of the rescues that we perform. At the time of writing this in November, we have had 49 no, 50 shouts this year - the pagers have just gone off!



Fundraising Porsche with lifeboat



Peace wins RNLI Pursuit Race

Racing Roundup

By **Julian Lord**



Blackjac

Photo: Chrissie Westgate

Both locally and nationally, the trend is for yacht racing numbers to continue to decline. This is something which is evident on the Crouch and Orwell, as well as the Blackwater, with the long-running Haven Series now no longer being staged. Support for the **Mersea Spring and Autumn Series**, our traditional local season opener and closer, has dwindled to a very low level. In an effort to reverse this trend, the Sailing Committee this year took comments and ideas from members

through a survey of owners. The 2019 racing programme will incorporate as many of these ideas as possible, with the goal of achieving better turnouts for weekend races.

The Spring Series was again won by Julian Lord's International H Boat *Humdinger*, while Toby Ramsay's self-designed and built Ramsay 6.7 *Mojito* took the Autumn Series. A few individual weekend races still see reasonable support, with the **Wallet Cup** being a case in point. A total of

10 boats competed for this in very light airs on a sunny Saturday morning in August. Single-handers took the top three places, each gybing spinnakers downwind several times. *Humdinger* won by just 30 seconds from Steve Johnson's Beneteau 21.7 *Bear* - third was James Millar's Oyster 26 *Pipedream*. Similarly, the **Ancient Mariners Race** had reasonable support, *Humdinger* winning from John Clifton's Sigma 33 *Starfall II* and Jack Davis' Sadler 32 *Clockwise*. For this fun race,

handicaps are adjusted according to the average age of the people on board, with *Clockwise's* average age of 81 giving her the biggest adjustment! Sadly, high winds caused the **Ladies Regatta** to be postponed in August, and with virtually no entries for the re-arranged date in late September the event was not held. In June, with only one boat on the line, for the first time ever the **Centenary Cup** was not raced for. As usual, the **Autumn Trophy** was the final race of the season, and eight boats turned out on a sunny autumn day. In a light breeze, *Mojito* took the trophy ahead of Barry Ashmore's C&C27 *Algonquin* and *Blackjac*.

FRIDAY SERIES

The best supported and most keenly fought series was again Dabchicks Sailing Club's Friday Series, with turnouts in the high teens, eight different race winners and all the scheduled 15 races completed. The series went down to the wire, with *Humdinger* taking the top slot by three points from *Mojito*, followed by the leading Cork 1720 *Mexican Train* owned by Alan Brook, Leo Knifton's Melges 24 *Brandyhole* and the leading Sonata, Simon Farren's *Camel*. Apart from sporting a new mainsail and having fortnightly scrubs, *Humdinger* certainly benefitted from making good starts and, as the highest rated boat in the 'Slow' fleet, often having clear air for most of the race.

IRC SPORTSBOAT RACING

Following the successful introduction of an IRC Sportsboat fleet in Mersea Week last year, the 2018 programme included an IRC Sportsboat Series, spread over the season. Whilst this tailed off in the autumn, support earlier in the season was reasonable, with *Brandyhole* winning the series from *Mojito* and the leading Cork 1720, Stuart Bradshaw's *Any Old Excuse*.

In **Mersea Week**, the classes' 11-boat entry was dominated numerically by the seven locally based Cork 1720s, and enjoyed some good close racing. Richard Matthews' newly acquired 1720 *Decoy* won from *Brandyhole*, a second Melges 24, *What A Blast*, helmed by Hamish Cock and *Mojito*.

MERSEA WEEK

Held in the final week of August, high



Tramp

Photo: Chrissie Westgate

winds saw the first day's racing postponed and the second day sailed in fresh, gusty conditions. A change in the weather then came in, with far lighter breezes and some necessary postponements. Race Officer Brian Bolton and his team did well to get in all five scheduled races, with the Club's regatta held on the final day sailed in sunshine and a lovely sea breeze. As in previous years, the **Local Handicap** cruiser fleet was divided into two divisions. In the 'A' division, the Beneteau 31.7s *Toucan* (Ed Taylor/Richard Davenport) and regular Harwich Town SC visitor *Wookie* (Stuart Howells) placed first and third, with Frank Reed's *Hustler 32 Tramp* skippered by Steve Johnson making a welcome reappearance and finishing second. In the 'B' division, *Humdinger* took top slot, ahead of the Sigma 292 *Dura* (Alan Mason/Shirley Swan) and the visiting Limbo 6.6 *Eau de Vie*

(Cheryl Wright/Ernie Breavington) from Thames Estuary YC.

Similarly, the **Classic Yachts & Gaffers** raced in two divisions. Whilst small, the 'A' division saw some very close results between first and second – three seconds one day, 10 seconds another! It was the Jack Knights designed keelboat *Black Diamond* (Greg Dunn) which won from John Munns lovely looking Camper & Nicholson 43 *Dark Horse*. The large and varied 'B' division was dominated by visiting boats, Simon Lewington's Brittany class *Droleen II* from Tollesbury winning by just a point from the leading Stellas, *Stardust* (Philip Waring, Haven Ports YC) and *L'etoile* (Tim Wood, Walton & Frinton YC).

The nine-strong **Sonata** class again enjoyed some close tussles, *Camel* winning from *Aubie Too* (Tony Hawkes/Pat Hill), *Wet Endeavour* (the Gozzett, Roberts & Shipton



Rimfire

Photo: Chrissie Westgate

partnership) and Jack Davis's *Blackjac*.

WHITE SAIL RACING

Eight of the scheduled 10 races in the season-long **White Sail Series** were completed, with a new winner this year – Richard and Sue Taylor's Hustler 30XM *Rimfire*. Next up were *Hannelore*, David Curtis' Bavaria 34, *Dura* and *Cirrus*, the Moody 31S of Mike Edwards and Dave Lewis. The **Coronation Cup** which forms part of the Centenary Regatta saw nine boats competing, with *Blackjac* winning all three races to take the trophy ahead of *Rimfire* and *Bear*.

In **Mersea Week**, an excellent 17-boat entry was divided for prizes into A and B fleets, but all raced together. Despite retiring on the first (windy) day when

his children were seasick and then suffering a 60 odd point NHC handicap change over the week, the overall and 'B' division winner was Ben Simpson and family sailing the MG Spring 25 *Recoil*. They were also awarded the trophy for the best overall performance in the cruiser classes. Second both overall and in the 'B' fleet was Bob Mercer with his Hustler 25.5 *UFO*. These two were followed by the leading 'A' division boats, *Hannelore* and Rob Smith's Oceanis 323 *Tamarisk*. The White Sail season finished with six boats racing in the **Finola Cup**, *Bear* winning the trophy ahead of *Odessa*, the UFO34 (Malcolm Clark), and *Lahloo*, Richard Bailey's Cornish Crabber.

AWAY FROM MERSEA

Beyond the Blackwater, I was struck by two stark examples which illustrate the trend of falling numbers. Firstly, in 1995 I competed with 61 other boats in CHS Class 4 in **Cowes Week**, with the half tonner *Chia Chia*. In contrast, in 2014 I raced with 21 other boats at the regatta in IRC Class 6 with my Impala *Scallywag*. This year, the club's only entrant in Cowes Week was Richard Matthews, with *Oystercatcher XXXI* in IRC Class 1. The second example relates to the **East Anglian Offshore Racing Association** (EAORA) series. A 1995 article by Jan Wise referred to a massive 80 boats racing in the club's Pattinson Cup in 1974, whereas 'only' 27 turned out in 1995. This year, just

Humdinger



seven boats competed. One wonders how much longer the series can continue, especially with three classes. Numbers held up a little better in EAORA's three day Offshore Regatta, with 13 entries. Michael Wheeler's S&S41 *Golden Fleece* placed sixth in this and was the only real WMYC supporter of the main series. Michael won the Buckley Goblets finale, but from just five other boats. The record elapsed time for the Goblets of 8hrs 6mins 28secs, set in 1994 by Malcolm Struth's little Prism 28 *Thrust*, was not challenged! In the series as a whole, the S&S41 finished fourth overall and second in Class Three. The annual Levington Classics regatta in June remains popular and saw four WMYC owners

Photo: Chrissie Westgate



Toucan

Photo: Chrissie Westgate

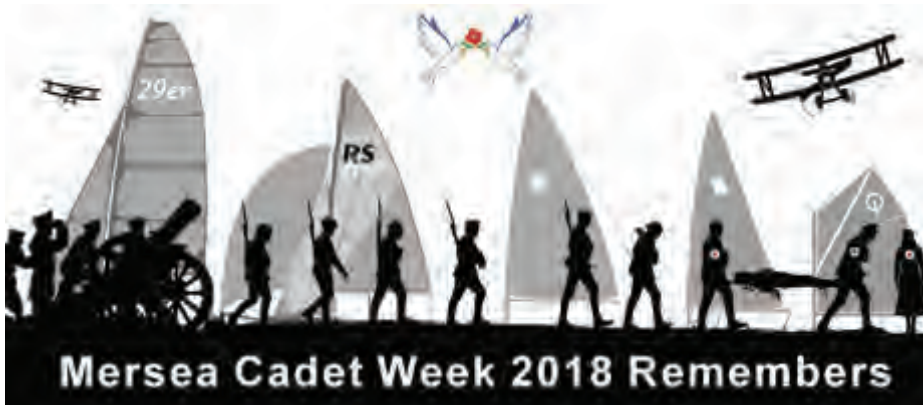
in action, with Phil Plumtree's West Solent *Arrow* finishing second overall in the 35-boat fleet and winning the Fast Class. Fifth overall and third in the Fast Class was Richard Matthews' Wm Fife *Kismet*, with *Golden Fleece* 14th overall and eighth in the same class. Eight Stellas also competed, with Trevor Spero's *Stella Lyra* in fifth.

THANKS

Thanks again go to Brian and Wendy Bolton and their regular team on *Blue Horizon* for officiating in some club races, as well as Mersea Week. Also to Vice Commodore Paul Jackson who officiated in a number of races. The highly professional manner consistently in evidence from all is much appreciated by all those who race.

Cadet Week

By **Gordon Eckstein**, Chairman



Mersea Cadets marked the centenary of the end of the First World War, with cadet captains choosing their team names to reflect family military connections.

Tom Brown - Durham Light Infantry.
Sam Cohen - Royal Horse Artillery.
Timothy Crossley/Harry Chatterton - Royal Tank Regiment .
Hattie Dumas – Royal Artillery.
Cameron Dix/Jonny Barnes - Royal Gurkha Rifles.
Angus Eckstein - 17th Lancers.
Nathaniel French - Royal Anglian Regiment.
Ed Gibson - Light Dragoons.
Ed Holroyd - Duke of Wellington's Regiment.
Zeb Milgate - Parachute Regiment.
Ollie Latham - Prince of Wales Royal Regiment.
Charlie Pearce - Household Cavalry.

With military precision, Jackie Bessey and Laura Jones led their social team and presented us with an inspiring week of activities.

Cadet captains were marshalled by Viv Gozzett, who must be due a long service medal. Although she confided in me that she was looking forward to a further nine or so more years of Cadet Week!

Wednesday evenings are traditionally a night off. However, this year was marked with a spectacular black-tie

dinner, as the Long Room at the yacht club was transformed into an officer's mess. Senior Cadets enjoyed excellent food a world away from Maconochie Stew.

Once again we were blessed with perfect weather for the Peace Party, held on Monkey Beach. The final evening saw Tom Brown give an emotional rendition of the Last Post.

As for the sailing, the week started with a real blow. Luckily the water was warm as many of the cadets seemed to want to swim!

Outside Fleet racing, led by race officer Richard Holroyd, assisted by Ben Woodcraft and Simon Clifton, braved the conditions onboard the luxurious Serendipity, kindly provided by Peter and Liz Clements.

The lively conditions kept safety officer Nick Purdie and his team busy fishing cadets out of the water and rescuing many from the beach. Fortunately for all, the weather improved as the week progressed and we finished with no cadets missing in action.

There were 25 boats in the Fast Fleet, made up mostly of Laser Standards, Laser Radials and Laser 4.7s. Also sailing were an RS Aero7, an RS 200 and an International 420. James Brosnan-Wren led the charge, followed closely by Charlie Pearce and Tim Crossley.



Keen competition for Fast Fleet at the mark

Newcomer to the Outside Fleet, Daisy Weston sailed well in her Laser 4.7.

James Brosnan-Wren was eventual winner of the much coveted Viking Trophy after battling it out in a Friday sail-off with the other fleet champions in the Sonatas.

The colourful 15-strong Feva Fleet enjoyed some tight racing, as Theo Clifton and Will Sanderson battled hard with Lucy Aird-Brown and Amy Struth. They finished with identical total scores and only two points separated them after two discards. Exciting competition!

There were nine boats in Slow Fleet, a ménage of Teras, Toppers and a Topaz. Charlie Jacobs came out on top, with



Picture by Chrissie Westgate

second and third place proving a tight competition between Daniel Milgate and Jack Gibson.

Optimist Fleet racing was led by Lurch Blackmore and Chris Burr, with safety officer James Sanderson and his team.

Optimist Gold saw an amazing display of racing, with Finian Morris and Charlotte Ellen ending the week with only a point between them. Dominic Gozzett, Alex Canham, Dudley Burr and Juliette Martin all sailed well.

A huge Ruby Fleet was won by Matthew Sanderson, closely followed by James Ryan and Matilda Milgate.

Emerald was won by Charlotte

Grainger, who just beat Ollie Daniels, on count-back.

Diamond Fleet, with 26 entries, had their own course and were managed by race officer Simon Cook. This was won by Sonny Simpson, closely followed by Jack White and Harry Bowman.

My thanks to the Cadet Week committee, to our Platinum Supporters Micro-Scooters and The Royal Hospital School. Also to our Gold Supporters, Marr Procurement, West Mersea Dental Practice, Timeline and all those valued supporters, boat loaners, anonymous donors, fuel givers, beach crew and wader wearers, computer programmers & logo designers, lawn crew, safety crew, beach crew, galley crew, tally masters, race officers, spotters, mark

layers, club launches ... the list goes on! Together we make it happen.

Cadet Week has been such an important and enjoyable part of my family life for more than 10 years. It has been a pleasure to help so many cadets, including my boys, grow in confidence as they develop so many life skills through sailing.

It has also been a joy to see so many people coming through to help with the week. After the past two years as chairman, I am now very happy to hand on the baton. Cadet Week 2019 will be in the capable hands of Rachel Humphreys.

(Visit Mersea Cadet Week website to enjoy the memories)



Pictures by Chrissie Westgate



Cadet Week 2018 – Results

Viking Trophy:

James Brosnan-Wren

Inside Fleet:

Gold:

- 1 Finian Morris
- 2 Charlotte Allen
- 3 Dominic Gozzett

Ruby:

- 1 Mathew Sanderson
- 2 Henry Ryan
- 3 Matilda Milgate
- 4 James Blackmore
- 5 Sidney Jones

Emerald:

- 1 Charlotte Grainger
- 2 Ollie Daniels
- 3 Izzy Bartlett
- 4 Poppy Lowe
- 5 Oliver Bird

Diamond:

- 1 Sonny Simpson
- 2 Jack White
- 3 Harry Bowman
- 4 Joel Simpson
- 5 Zara Yuzen

Seamanship Ruby:

- 1 Sam Grout
- 2 Noah Papley
- 3 Matilda Milgate

Seamanship Emerald:

- 1 Charlotte Grainger
- 2 Izzy Bartlett
- 3 Lizzie Riley/ Alice Kelly/ Ollie Daniels

Seamanship Diamond:

- 1 Joel Simpson
- 2 Harry Bowman
- 3 Fin Mason

Tenacity Emerald:

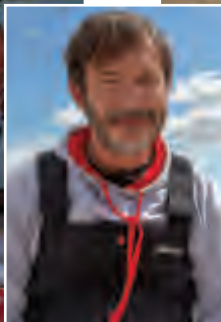
Evie Simmons

Tenacity Diamond:

- 1 Lincoln Kelly

Emerald Most Improved Sailor:

Alice Jones



Tomato Boat Trophy:
Matthew Sanderson

Special Award:
Sam Grout

Outside Fleet:

Fast:

- 1 James Brosnan-Wren
- 2 Charlie Pearce
- 3 Timothy Crossley & Harry Chatterton

Medium:

- 1 Theo Clifton & Will Sanderson (Feva Cup)
- 2 Lucy Aird-Brown & Amy Struth
- 3 Elizabeth Philpott & Lucie Latham

Slow:

- 1 Charlie Jacobs
- 2 Daniel Milgate
- 3 Jack Gibson

Most Bullets:
James Brosnan-Wren

Laser 4.7 Cup:
Daisy Weston

Laser Radial Cup;
James Brosnan-Wren

Laser Standard Cup:
Freddie Rogers

Outside Seamanship:
Lucy Aird-Brown & Amy Struth

Hannah Stodel Award:
Harry Blackmore

Mersea Week DVD

By **Jeremy Newson**

During Mersea Week there are rough days and smooth out on the water, as we all know. But even if the breeze isn't stiff, the competition is bound to be. And photographer Chrissie Westgate is out in all conditions with her trusty camera capturing the smacks, barges, brigs and dinghies as they round the mark amidst cries of 'water!', 'windward boat!', 'starboard!' and... 'damn!' Capturing the action while perched on a pitching rib is no mean feat, but her fearlessness, sea-legs and years of experience make her the go-to gal when it comes to immortalising the annual mayhem in such stunning detail.

Back on dry land and during a well-deserved drink round at ours, Chrissie happened to hear a musical track I had been working on. I had played it for my

son, a dance music composer and DJ, who suggested that, though it was of course brilliant, it needed 'something'... waves? We'd just been for a sail ourselves so maybe he was still rocking... or slightly nauseous. I compose music in a virtual studio on my computer, so adding the sound of waves was a matter of Googling the gurgling, downloading it and 'laying in the extra track'. The waves, calmly and rhythmically shushing on a shingle beach (note the onomatopoeia), gave the piece a soothing vibe. And backing vocals from a chorus of (virtual) seagulls completed the transformation from chilled tune to nautical anthem, namely 'Round the Island'. Look out Desert Island Discs!



Chrissie said: 'that'll be the perfect soundtrack for my slideshow'. And so, after a bit of software jiggery-pokery, stunning images and soothing tunes are now married together on a DVD in a match made in Mersea, where round every corner is someone who'll volunteer to have a go at practically anything you can think of. All profits to the volunteers of the RNLI. Safe and happy sailing.



All pictures above and opposite from the DVD, by Chrissie Westgate



40 years of Mersea and (many) other races

By **Ed Taylor**

In the furthest recesses of our glass cupboard is one of my most treasured possessions. Not for public display, it is a half pint glass tankard - crazed and scarred from too much use and poor dishwashers. However, you can still read the legend 'Mersea Week 1978' etched into it. Where have all the years gone? To my knowledge, I have not missed a Mersea Week since.

I earned this award crewing for Tony Hawkes in his Enterprise dinghy. It might surprise younger readers to learn that Tony was not always welded to the tiller of his beloved Sonata, *Aubie Too*. In fact in those days he was of the opinion that cruiser racing was for wimps and sissies. It was my first experience of competitive sailing and nearly the last with Tony. I dropped the whisker pole overboard in a force 1 wind and in reaching for it, promptly capsized us. Tony constantly reminds me of this to this day and has never forgiven me for embarrassing him. However, it was experiences such as this that determined that dinghy racing was not going to be my forte and I decided I needed the stability of a keel under me. The Dabchicks had a cruiser fleet with the likes of *White Pepper*, *Marpip*, *Excalibur* and *Paprika*. *Algonquin* (still known as 'All-gone-queer') was probably scratch boat at the time.

Fitzy and I bought a Hunter 19, a 'Squib with a lid', for the princely sum of not very much and we entered the exotic world of cruiser racing. To our surprise and chagrin we did not win much, if anything, during her first year - despite having given her hull a freshly hand-painted topcoat of hideous green. We thought we must have a faulty handicap or a poor crew. We do remember courses much longer than we have nowadays and the rudder breaking on the wrong side of the Colne Bar buoy on an ebb tide, necessitating a rather nerve wracking sail into Brightlingsea. We also remember much colder summers.

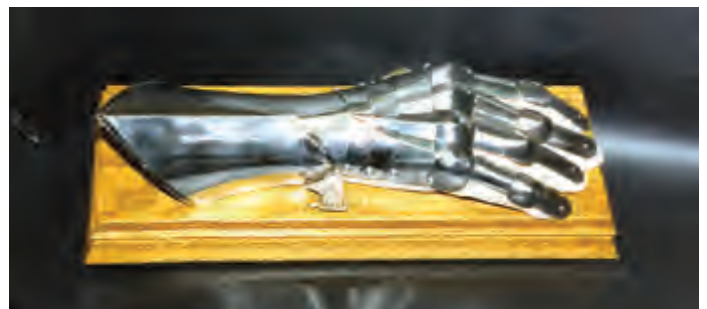
In those days, West Mersea Yacht Club dominated the East Anglian Offshore Racing Association (EAORA), with leviathans of International Offshore Rule (IOR) racing such as the *Caronades*, the *Oystercatchers*, *Mercury* and *Bright Spark* to name just a few. Naturally the owners of these wonderful vessels eschewed the racing at Mersea for the more competitive climes of Cowes Week, Burnham Week and Ramsgate Week. I could only gaze in awe and envy at the yachts when they returned to their home moorings.

Peter Rowe introduced a Sonata one-design into the local mix and it seemed like a good fun little yacht. Others

quickly followed suit and when Dave 'Dunny' Dunn moved to the island we purchased a good example together and encouraged many others to do the same. Soon we were playing dodgems with eight or nine other Sonatas, and Mersea Week gave us our own start. It quickly became our local championship. During the week we used to hold a somewhat riotous Sonata supper at the then Willow Lodge. We had more success in the Sonata fleet, winning the week twice or more. Our eldest boys sailed with us then, and with them and their mates we were never short of crew. The WMYC sailing commodore at the time was John Clifton who could never pronounce our Sonata's name properly. *IV Play* became 'Eye Vee Play'. I can't think why! We entered the two Sonata national events held on Mersea and towed our boat precariously and dangerously to Hayling Island for the nationals there. Dolly came too. The Sonata class is still the most popular one-design on Mersea and continues to have its own start during Mersea Week.

In 1985 (or '86?) I put up a magnum of champagne as trophy for a Friday night race series. Yes, 32 years ago. Really! It was to be an open series, initially of five races. Polly Cutts, of the then Wyatts Chandlery, donated a silver rowlock which we inserted into a plank of teak. This was knocked into shape by Tony Hawkes (whose resolve regarding cruiser sailing was weakening as he crewed on them) and we rested the Magnum on it. Five or six boats turned out for the first race. The event grew rapidly from then on, thanks to the efforts of John Spring and the bravery of John Haynes - offering *Pelican* on anchor as start boat to enable windward starts. The popularity of the series was helped in no small measure by the post race provision of tasty food in the galley prepared by the likes of Angela Sargent.

At about the same time I put up another trophy for match racing. The Blackwater Gauntlet is a fully articulated stainless steel and leather glove, meant as a challenge to



The Blackwater Gauntlet

Week



Corking days on the Blackwater



Toucan

yacht clubs from the Crouch and Orwell to send teams to the Blackwater to race in Sonatas in a one-day knockout series. I would like to see this resurface, perhaps using Cork 1720s as well?

One-design racing seemed to be the affordable way forward to me and another Hunter boat given its own start during Mersea Week was the National Squib. Barry Pearson and Keith Adams put tremendous effort into this class, which ensured a lot of entries. Some excellent sailors bought Squibs, and I cannot recall much success for my *Skit*. After around 80 of them competed here in the wonderfully organised UK Nationals of 1987, where we finished 19th and won a prize for being the 'first boat overall who had not won a prize'. Thank you Barry and Keith, it was appreciated. After 1987 the class quickly disintegrated locally.

The most successful boat I ever owned was the Laser 28 *Nemesis*. For those of you that remember the programme *Howard's Way*, it was the boat that the wooden character Tom designed in a moment of inspiration as a boat which could "cruise but also race". What a novel idea, I'm surprised no one else had thought of that! *Nemesis* did race well, however, being equally happy in heavy or light weather. She was a prototype for many more of the class which still race successfully under a variety of handicap rules. As well as Mersea Weeks, we had three successful Ramsgate Weeks and a less successful, but equally enjoyable, Cork Week.

Unfortunately I was persuaded by glib tongued fellow racers to part with *Nemesis* for the more 'exciting' experience of one-design racing in a blossoming fleet of Cork 1720s. Yes, it was exciting at times - occasionally somewhat more than exciting and always hard on sails. I seem to remember spending every Monday at Gowan's collecting spinnaker repairs until in the end they asked me to take the bits away. During the nationals hosted by the yacht club, a careless tack caused a lump to appear on the top of my head. The following day an even more careless tack saw the lump removed, necessitating a visit to A&E

Much to the relief of my ever-maturing crew, I put my Cork in part exchange for *Destiny*, which Basher Wiggins and I bought together. *Destiny* was a well raced and well maintained Mersea boat, which we knew would take a lot to live up to its record in the hands of Robin Gozzett. Very young guns, sons Josh and Angus, rose to the challenge with the old boys and we also enjoyed a few very successful years. These were the heydays of Sail East, so we were competing against some of the best guys the east coast had to offer.

The next venture for Basher and I was *Billy Whizz*, a tired and scruffy Formula 28. We don't talk about her. I doubt if she appears on any Mersea Week records.

The current boat is *Toucan*, a powerful Beneteau First 31.7 which I now share with Richard Davonport. The old crew guys have retired hurt, preferring back pain caused by golf swings to the agony of post-sailing Mondays. Grandson Cameron and Richard's sons Max and Ollie are the new cannon fodder and are improving year on year. So much so we won the two club regattas and also won our class in my 40th Mersea Week this year - by the handsome margin of one point and 15 seconds on corrected time from our rivals *Tramp* in the last race! The boys are already fed up with the sound of my voice and are muttering darkly about defecting to the resurgent Cork 1720 fleet.

So will I make a 41st Mersea Week? Time, as they say, will tell.



IV Play

How not to do it

By Ian Crossley



Sea Otter stranded

At the beginning of August we had a quick trip down to the Kent coast on *Sea Otter*. Leaving Mersea in very light airs we drifted around to East Mersea Point, where we anchored just north of the Spit. There is a back eddy here and you never know which way you're going to face. The following morning we got under way, using the chugger on tick-over, and carried the ebb out of the Colne.

We arrived at Wallet Spitway at low water slack, switched the engine off and, with the wind now force 3 on the beam, we had a very nice sail up the Swin to the East Swale. There were very few yachts around and it was hot and sunny. Crossing the main shipping channel we had to give way to a large container ship that was outward bound. The wind held fair and we made good time, arriving at the

entrance to Faversham Creek two hours before high water. We stowed the sails and motored slowly up to Faversham. The tide was only a small one and we could not find a berth so we returned down the river, following our 'snail trail' on the GPS to go to anchor just south of Harty Ferry. The wind was now NE at 20kts. I had dropped anchor in shallow water where it was smooth and hoped for the best. I thought we would touch bottom at low water and not long after midnight we took on a bit of a list for an hour or so. Meanwhile the wind had dropped to a glassy calm.

Mid-morning still with no wind we got the anchor up and, with the engine on tick over again, meandered slowly westward. We had on board a new copy of the East Coast Pilot, but as I had been this way before I neglected to read it all up. We have a small

Garmin chart plotter which was showing us the way and as we approached the old causeway my mind was elsewhere. I had asked Rosamund to look up the procedure for calling the lifting bridge. I was not watching the chart plotter, as I was not concerned as to where we were going as, again, we had done the trip before. I could see the twin posts on either side of the causeway. The ebb tide in the Swale once you cross watershed goes westward and our speed picked up to 5kts. From the keel there came a horrible grating noise as we ran aground on the old causeway. I was far too far to the south and had missed the deepwater completely.

Only two days before we set off I had put *Sea Otter* on the hard at Mersea two hours before low-water in order to clean the propeller and the bow thruster. On that occasion she had listed to starboard, so the port side was scrubbed as well. Now Murphy's law took over as we leaned over to starboard again. The yacht went to an alarming angle and the basin in the heads filled with seawater that came up through the plughole. I had not turned the seacock off. As the tide went out we were now surrounded by dry land, or rather Pacific Rock oysters. The yacht's list was so great that I was unable to do any maintenance. The sun made it very hot. We were listing to just under 40 degrees, so as a precaution I put a wooden bung in the engine exhaust and the heads shower pump outlet. I had never been aground at this angle before and I knew that I could easily knock them out when we came afloat.

Four-and-a-half hours later we got underway again. Passing through the bridge at 17.10 hours we carried on to Queenbrough, where we made fast to the pontoons at the end of the floating causeway. To celebrate our safe arrival we went ashore and had a very good meal at the Flying Dutchman.

Dorothy at Rest

Each year National Historic Ships UK holds a photographic competition, with categories celebrating various aspects of the UK's maritime history. Several Mersea photographers entered this year. Three were shortlisted and invited to Trinity House in London for the awards ceremony in November. This was no mean achievement as over the last nine years this has become an international competition. After a champagne lunch, awards were made to a range of historic vessels for preservation work. Paul Atterbury (of Antiques Roadshow fame) then presented the photographic prizes. In category B, Skills in Action, Peter Pangbourne was highly commended (second) for 'Caulking'. In the People's Choice category he was runner up with 'Dorothy at Rest.' Next year he will be rallying the troops to get even more votes!

Alison Pangbourne



National 18s race at

By **Alison Pangbourne**



Crews from near and far compete on the Blackwater

West Mersea Yacht Club was delighted that the National 18s chose the Blackwater estuary for their 80th Anniversary National Championship in July this year. The yacht club hosted the event, with strong contributions from the Dabchicks Sailing Club and The Blackwater Sailing Club.

The class has a long history evolving from the original clinker wooden Uffa Fox 'Ace', which was adopted in 1938, through to the latest Phil Morrison designed two or three person trapeze dinghy, built by White Formula of

Brightlingsea. Both these designs were represented at the championships - predominately the Morrison 'Ultras' - but also a number of 'Ultimates' which raced in a separate fleet. There was a fair sprinkling of family crews.

There were visitors from Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man and France, not to mention The Blackwater Sailing Club! The committee boat, *Blue Horizon*, did her job as admirably as ever with Paul Jackson as principal race officer getting in as many races as possible. One race had to be AP'd 10 seconds before the start due to a 40

degree windshift! Winds on the whole were mainly in the south, reinforced by sea breezes to a steady force 3-5. There was also plenty of sunshine. There were three back-to-back races over four days, making 12 in all. Courses were windward/leeward with much very close racing. *Second Wife* and *Shark Too* ended equal on points overall, but after discards *Second Wife* took the major trophy. Third was *Fifty Shades* and fourth *Two and a half Men*. The 'Ultimate' prize was won by *Crossfire* crewed by an 11 year old who was the youngest competitor.

Mersea (and party!)



Winning crew of Crossfire



Close racing at mark A

Not only did the visitors bring the sight of some spectacular sailing, but they also brought the 'craich', music and sheer enjoyment of the social activities as well. There were oysters in abundance, belly dancers, musicians and an anniversary dinner. Rumour has it that the Irish in particular drank the bar dry! The prize giving was a memorable occasion with prizes for most, much communal singing, wall dancing and a memorable rendition of 'Paddy McGinty's Goat' from Tom Dwyer.

Everyone had a very enjoyable week!



Friday night is music (and drinking) night

House Notes

By **Alan Jones**, Rear Commodore House

The most noteworthy news of the past year was that the kitchen had a major refurbishment. This included the installation of a 'Rational' oven - a clever device that has a computer as a brain and even cleans itself after use! While the kitchen was closed during February for all this work, we were able to accommodate the Mersea Island Rowing Club's gig racing event. Their races were conducted using the WMYC line and bar takings took a boost, post racing. Quite a number of the rowers are yacht club members too.

Another boost to bar profits was the National 18s Championship, hosted by the club during July. While the sailing event is mentioned elsewhere, the House side of trading enjoyed record sales during the dedicated partying. Cadet Week was themed on WW1 and the club hosted a formal dinner for the elder Cadets in our Long-Room, when service was mainly provided by their committee. The Friday Prize Giving and party was the usual success, our staff are to be congratulated for their long hours.

During Cadet Week we had a change-over of head chefs, when Matt left to pursue his dream of self-employment and we welcomed Eddie back after a four-and-a-half-year absence.

Mersea Week is normally the club's prime trading period and even with the weather against us both for sailing and lawn sun-bathing, trade was up.

Most of us have probably forgotten the House Survey conducted earlier this year. I thought that this would be a good opportunity to say where we have progressed with the answers from your returns.

Staff training has been addressed in that two lecturers from the Edge Hotel School, University of Essex held a



Another satisfied customer

session with our bar and waiting staff. Cellar training was given by Cask Marque (paid for by Adnams). Defibrillator training was carried out by Mersea's First Responders to all our staff and some committee members. In return for that excellent session a donation was made to their uniform fund. Robert Hill then held a session on HSE matters, lifting, fire safety, near-miss reporting and attitudes to safety. That enhanced knowledge base allows new staff to benefit from the experience of others.

Although summer balls have gone out of favour, the summer party was a success. Excellent weather and live music was the perfect recipe for a lawn party, which not even the Mersea mosquitoes could spoil!

Those members who drink coffee will have noticed a marked improvement in their brews since the installation of two 'Tassimo' machines, behind the bar.

Just prior to writing this article, a wine tasting was held with a new supplier and the new wines will be introduced after Christmas. The committee are

sure that you will not be disappointed.

While on the subject of drink, unfortunately it has not been possible to serve draught beer from the Molliette Bar, even after seeking the advice of a professional cellar-man. The main problem is that of not being able to safely deliver barrels upstairs. However, the bar has remained popular through the summer with its balcony and the best view in Mersea.

Your elected House Committee meet throughout the year when the strategic running of the club is decided, but beyond that there is much 'unseen activity', for which I thank them all on all our member's behalf.

To our hard-working and dedicated staff, I also wish to say a huge 'thank you' on behalf of all members.

Looking ahead, the next main aim of your House Committee will be the financing and building of a lift to serve those members and guests unable to use the stairs. A bonus to that project is that a lift could carry beer barrels upward too!

Yet more changes

By **Malcolm Clark**, Rear Commodore Moorings & Boatyard



Moorings sunset

Towards the middle of last season (2017) we recruited and welcomed Harry Clarke to the yacht club's launchman team. He has since moved on to a career working on sand barges and we wish him every success in life. But there is always light at end of the tunnel - and no sooner had Harry moved on, than we employed his younger brother Zac! They certainly know how to raise good boatmen in the Clarke family and Zac has certainly proved a very good waterman/launch driver and generally a good all-round guy, being able to turn his hand to anything to do with boats and the waterfront.

Just as we thought the cogs of our department were well oiled and running smooth, our senior launchman Paul Hammond handed us his notice, indicating a certain isolation while living on his boat all summer on the Mersea water, away from family and friends. We fully understand and sympathise with his predicament. He has left the Club launch service in a better state than he received it and has offered to come back on a part-time basis. We wish him well for the future

and look forward to seeing him on the launch in any capacity he feels able to help with.

Paul's resignation has led to promotion for our very popular and very capable second launchman Phil Cheetham. We were delighted that Phil took up the challenge and accepted the role as senior launchman. Phil will be accompanied by the appointment of a second full time employee, who needs no introduction – Ollie Jarvis! Ollie is a pleasant and helpful young man whose boat handling skills are not disputed. We are especially pleased to have him back.

Zac Clarke has also agreed to give us more commitment and so we are pleased to announce he is now our part-time launchman. Zac is offering his services on Friday and Sunday afternoon and evening shifts, as well as Monday and Tuesday day time. He is a particularly accomplished and helpful young man.

On another note, we are most grateful to Stacey Belbin for all the support she has given to our launchmen and

members throughout the year when we were under duress (breakdown of the launch, men off sick etc). We look forward to a good continued relationship with her in the coming season.

The City Road facility has been further improved this year with a good clean-out of rubbish, enabling us to find space for another four boats. This makes it, I am sure, the most popular place for members to store their boats over the winter.

Coming up, we have another big project for Moorings and Boatyard: the installation of a rib dock for members. The plan is to install four docks between two of our existing piles, with the possibility of filling the last two piles if the demand is there. Any members interested in a place in the rib dock please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Well how time flies when you're enjoying yourself! Low and behold, I am almost at the end of my two years at M&B. It has been a privilege, sometimes exciting, mostly very time consuming - especially when still having to hold down a full time job. But it has also been very rewarding when I look back at what we have achieved – fantastic, helpful launchmen, a night service, a boat storage facility second to none and a whole host of other things to boot.

Taking everything into consideration, my second year has been rather exciting! I wish you fair winds and following seas for our next sailing season.

One last update for all members: the launch will now run until 19.30 on Bank Holiday Mondays as opposed to 17.30. So you can start planning those late finishes now!

I'm Not a Racing Man,

By Jay Stapley

I've always thought of myself as a cruising sailor: racing never interested me, as I go sailing for relaxation and peace and quiet.

When I sailed out of Poole Harbour in the 1980s and 1990s, my distaste for racing was reinforced by finding myself in the middle of fleets of Whitbread 60s (or whatever they were) thrashing about Bournemouth Bay or, worse still, the enclosed waters of the Solent itself. Grim-faced skippers would command their crews of blonde Australian beefcake grinding furiously away at winches, the tense silence interspersed with bouts of screamed orders and insults being hurled at any unfortunate crewperson who had failed to trim the spinnaker by the precise number of millimetres which any fool could see was the right amount.

Whereas my sailing methodology allows for margins of error of up to a mile, these fleets of guided fibreglass missiles dealt in mere centimetres. My reading of the literature suggested that the only thing to do was to stick rigidly to the Rules of the Road. So that's what I did, sitting immobile in the cockpit of my Kingfisher 20+ (the '+' was important: it indicated a few extra inches of waterline length!) and grimly holding my course at all of four knots on the starboard tack whenever possible, as various lumps of plastic and razor-sharp shards of carbon graphite whizzed past my humble craft at speeds I'd never realised were achievable on water without a gas turbine engine.

I had once raced in my late teens. A friend in Faversham had a 19ft clinker built open fishing boat which, at the grand age of 99, was old enough to be entered in the smallest class in that year's Swale Barge Match. The weather was sunny but very windy. I had no idea quite how windy it was until we got back to harbour and were told there had been a helicopter out looking for us, as all the other boats had retired due to the dangerous conditions. All I

remember of that race was handling the jib sheets while my mate yelled 'Duck! Too late!' as yet another wave smashed against the bows and immersed me in green water. I didn't learn much about racing that day, but I learned a lot about seawater. I also learned about drinking: I was 18 and my friend was the singer in a band with me. We played every year after the barge match in the Hollowshore boatshed. I don't ever remember going home from those events.

Fast-forward to 2017. I'd been angling for a ride on a smack for a while, and thanks to the good offices of Fran's finest Fresh Catch I was told to be on the causeway at 8.30am the next day to take part in one of the Mersea Week races. I'd made it clear that as a musician I have to protect my hands (wiser heads might well observe that my twin hobbies of sailing and wood-working might well be poor choices in view of this constraint) and would not do any heavy rope-work. So I was asked to be the tactician, a job consisting of identifying the next mark on the course and making sure we made progress towards it. As I watched the other crew members wrestling with a flogging jib while clinging precariously to the bowsprit it became clear that this reservation had been a good idea. The race was eventually shortened, and I knew that the skipper had abandoned any hope of winning – let's be honest: he'd abandoned any hope of improving on our frankly unimpressive position of last – when he handed me two things: the helm and a beer. While not necessarily a triumph in the competitive sense, my first adult sailing race was enjoyable but not over-challenging.

This year, 2018, gave me the opportunity to take part in four races: a white-sails race, a smack race and a brig race in Mersea Week, and a classic yacht event a few weeks later. And the penny started to drop. I now actually like this racing lark, and I am becoming

increasingly fascinated by the tactics involved. I've sailed with four different skippers who took different approaches and I learned from all of them. The white sails race was extraordinary in that I was awarded points even though I didn't finish the race, which was abandoned after it became apparent that two different course cards were in use. The smack race was aboard the Dorothy, thanks to Robbie and Clare Lee, and I watched the skipper read the water and wind and trade yards in arrears for yards to windward to good effect. The brig race, aboard the Boy George courtesy of Charlotte and Stuart Cock, was on a glorious day, which started with all the competitors rafted up in the river in flat calm conditions having a party on the water. It ended with two afternoon races in a decent breeze and was again a master class in boat-handling and tactics. The classic yacht race was a spirited affair, even in winds that were at one point so light that we had to drop anchor to avoid being swept up to Maldon on the tide. But an hour later I was hanging on to the spinnaker sheet (another first for me: I'd never touched a spinnaker before) trying to stop my arms being wrenched from their sockets, as the helmsman took us so close to the wind in the dash to the finish line that the huge sail was alternately collapsing and filling.

My most abiding memory of the summer's racing was of four 13-tonne smacks converging on a turning mark. I say they were converging on a buoy, but they were also converging on a light fibreglass sports boat whose skipper showed commendable courage and presence of mind by realising that his only hope of avoiding being crushed was to accept the bowsprit of one of the smacks in the pit of his stomach and use it as a means of propelling him out of the jaws of a rapidly-closing vice.

So, it seems, I'm hooked. Anyone need crew next year?

But...



Behind you Jay! Smack racing action on Dorothy

Atlantic Crossing

By **Glen Samson**



As the three of us Sansom's (Glen, Oana and Ellie) sat in *Cloudy Bay's* cockpit, with warm morning sun and a lovely view over colonial houses and a palm covered beach, our Atlantic crossing all seemed so quick and easy. We had travelled on our Hallberg-Rassy 54 some 2,866 miles for a direct distance Lanzarote-Barbados of 2,742 miles. We'd done this in 17 days and nine hours. Average speed was 6.9kts, with maximum recorded 14.4kts.

For weather, there were four clear parts to the crossing: 1) a strong northerly wind, gusting up to 40kts, which blasted us clear of the Canaries, giving a thrilling ride but covering everything in salt spray; 2) 18 hours of lighter winds, motoring south west to pick up the trades; 3) two weeks downwind sailing in the wonderful trade winds, which blew very

consistently between 16-25kts. We experimented with various sail setups and ended up with twin head sails as the favourite; 4) The final day of multiple rain squalls separated by light sloppy winds as we approached Barbados, wondering if we would ever get there!

If the whole trip had been with fickle winds it would have been very tedious, so we are glad we waited until January when the trades are at full strength. Of course, with 20-plus knot winds comes two-to-three metre seas. These produced a constant rolling, which took some getting used to. But with twin headsails and using the older of our two autohelms, we managed to reduce the rolling to an acceptable level if we steered dead square to the waves. If we had the mainsail up, the rolling was definitely worse.

With regards to the ever-present squalls, yes we had the normal one or two per day, where the wind increased and we usually got pelted with rain. But we never experienced more than 30kts. A typical squall is preceded with a lull in the wind, then a blast. The blasts were good for us. In the lull, the passing swell rolled us badly. But then in the few seconds when the wind accelerated from say seven to 30kts, *Cloudy Bay* just took off and we were stable - surfing the swell to that lovely sound of rushing water on the hull. The first few squalls we reefed in preparation. But then we didn't bother, instead choosing to just enjoy the thrilling ride in the knowledge that it would soon go back to normal.

The systems worked flawlessly. Average power consumption was 10amps (at 24v) and we ran the generator one-and-a-half hours each



Dolphins dancing off the bow

day, charging the Li-ion batteries from 45 per cent back to 100 per cent. Whilst charging at 175amps we utilized the remaining generator power to run either the water heater or water maker. The solar panels gave 200watts in full sun, acting only as a top-up on power. All the nav systems were great. It was so comforting to know that the AIS would pick up any ship and warn us, well before we could see it. Not that we saw many! The Quantum radar was also great for seeing the rain squalls approaching at night.

With deck gear, the new boom preventers that led aft and pole guys both worked very well. But the asymmetric spinnaker was again a bit disappointing, even when we sheeted from the end of the boom. So tricky to handle this 200sqm beast, even when it's not filled with wind! Anyone want to buy a lightly used spinnaker? Or



Glen and Ellie collecting sargasso weed

maybe we should cut it in half and make lightweight twin headsails! Chaffing was our biggest issue. The genoa sheet wore halfway through at the end of the pole. If we had dared to carry the spinnaker for any length of time, there would have been big chaffing issues on the tack line.

Nature kept us entertained. Sun and moon risings and settings were special times of the day and the stars at night were mesmerizing - visible horizon to horizon. It also helped having Dr Ellie, the family astrophysicist, on board to name the stars and planets. Another highlight were dolphins on the bow almost every day, some pirouetting as they jumped a clear two metres out of the water. What amazing creatures.

There was the occasional bird too, and most mornings there were flying fish to clear from the decks. About halfway across we started to see sargasso weed patches and as we closed on the Antilles we were running through huge rafts of it. Since cruising the Windward and Leeward islands we can confirm that every east facing shore is plagued with the stuff. Collecting on the beaches, and stinking as it rots in the intense sun, it is ruining the tourist trade on most windward shores. This new phenomena is put down to rising sea temperatures.

Communication was via Iridium-Go, Garmin Inreach and SSB radio. The iridium was okay for simple emails, texts and, most importantly, to get the



Atlantic squall on Cloudy Bay



Twin headsails - the preferred option

daily weather from PredictWind. Not that we needed a forecast much of the time - it was the same every day once in the trades! The Iridium is also a phone. It did work, but with very poor audio quality and multiple dropouts. The Garmin put our track onto a website for all to see, plus provided text messaging. The SSB is a backup. We have a modem connected to it, from which we can email and get weather

GRIB files via our account with SailMail. There is still something magical about connecting via radio to a station 1,500 miles away in Nova Scotia! We also have an idle FleetBroadBand 250 Inmarsat - our bank balance is not enough to afford the monthly subscription. On the other end of the tech scale, Glen and Ellie practiced daily with our new sextant. Our best position was only 100 miles out!

Food supplies worked out really well. We hardly made a dent in our cupboards, and the freezer was still half full of meat on arrival. But then we had provisioned in Spain not only for the crossing but also for the Caribbean. The fresh fruit and vegetables lasted us all the way over, thanks to Oana's careful selection and preparation. As she had predicted, what didn't last was any veg that had previously been chilled. Cooking in a big rolling sea was a challenge and we could see why, with a bigger crew, some people opt to precook and freeze meals. We had hoped to catch fresh fish, but all we caught was sargasso weed! Our luck changed once in the Caribbean, landing many yummy fish - Mahi-Mahi being the best.

Each of us had our own sleeping technique. Glen snug in a lee-cloth in the saloon, Ellie favored the recovery position - diagonally across the mid cabin berth - while Oana jammed herself across the berth in the aft cabin, her height exactly matching the bed width! Bathroom antics were interesting. It's hard to relax and do your stuff on the toilet when gripping on for dear life. Having the seat in the aft shower was brilliant, that is until you had soap on your bum when it was somewhat lethal!



Sunsets were special times of day



Raising the Barbados courtesy flag

The cockpit was our main sanctuary and the tent was brilliant at keeping both the rain and the strong sun out. With the back window removed we had a good flow of air through during the day, but it did restrict star gazing at night. While Glen's legs were long enough to stretch across the cockpit, Ellie and Oana's were not. So we ended up sharing the cockpit with two fenders for them to rest their feet on. When not in use, they enjoyed annoying Glen by rolling all over the place – the fenders that is!

Pre-departure preparations paid off. All that intense work to prepare the boat, service everything and judiciously stock up supplies worked wonders. Above all, it's well documented that crew "getting along" is the key factor to a happy or bad crossing. The three of us bonded and worked excellently as a team. Oana key on the domestic front, Glen on the boat handling and Ellie a perfect combination of both. We did three hours on, six off shifts, which meant our time on watch shifted by three hours each day. Although this

was only really followed at night. During the day we were all up, bar a few naps.

All in all, our Atlantic crossing was a wonderful experience. We wouldn't want to change anything, except perhaps the rolling. But that is a given with downwind trades sailing.

Since the crossing we cruised and explored every one of the Windward Islands and most of the Leeward Islands and made a short video of our sailing and adventures per island, now posted on our YouTube channel (details below). By the end of May we had sailed over to the USA via The Bahamas and up the east coast to Bar Harbour in Maine. From there we sauntered slowly back south through the most amazing cruising grounds, all the way down the coast to the Chesapeake. At the time of writing, November, we are in a chilly Norfolk Virginia waiting for a weather window back to Antigua via Bermuda. In 2019 we are planning to cover the greater Antillies, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Jamaica, then on to Central America. After all that we'll be heading towards the Panama Canal, planning to transit in late 2019. Then it will be on to the Pacific.

You can follow us daily on www.SailCloudyBay.com and on YouTube channel: Sail Cloudy Bay.



Not cloudy bay! Carribbean bliss

Club Cruises

Jack Davis the Cruiser Captain introduces a sweltering summer programme

Cruises in Company were once again well attended and we got a fair share of the brilliant summer weather. As usual we spent a few days waiting for strong winds to abate, but the warm weather made this more of a pleasure than an ordeal. In all seven cruises were organised and the most popular were, as usual, the local rallies – Heybridge, Tollesbury, Osea BBQ and Brightlingsea.

For me the most memorable were the trips to Lowestoft, Southwold and the Deben, organised by John and Judith Kearin, and Brian and Gill Warwick's epic week in Chatham. We finished off the year with 48 people sitting down to supper in the Tollesbury Club. What a fitting end to a great season.

Next year's programme has some changes and new ideas so come to the Cruiser Lunch and Photo Competition on Sunday 24th February 2019 and see what we have planned.

Shake down cruise to Brightlingsea and Bradwell

Date: 21-22 April

Some 14 boats ventured out for the first cruise of the 2018 season, on what turned out to be nice sunny weekend. Leaving Mersea at various times on the tide on Saturday morning, the fleet had all arrived and were alongside their allocated berths by mid-afternoon.

All were eagerly anticipating what has now become a shakedown cruise highlight, drinks and canapés aboard *Tipsy Turvy*. Mein hosts Judy and Trevor (not forgetting Maisie the dog) excelled yet again with a plentiful supply of drinks to quench the thirst of the driest of mouths, complemented with a mouthwatering selection of canapés. Being mindful of the fact that we had booked dinner at Colne Yacht Club several of the gathering were heard to mutter as another tray of goodies was handed around 'Oh! I shouldn't really, It'll spoil my dinner. Oh go on then, just one more!'

We were fortunate that Colne Yacht Club had arranged for some pre-dinner entertainment in the form of The Motley Crew. For those unfamiliar with said Crew, they are a group of gentleman singers who specialise in sea shanties and the telling of amusing tales. During their performance we were encouraged to pull pieces of rope in time to a shanty about hoisting a sail. We then learned and performed the actions (similar to that of the 'YMCA' hit) to a shanty that, according to the lyrics, assured us that we would have

plenty of drinking time on a two-day turnaround in old Tilbury Town. The set finished with the crew singing about a lady who had her body covered in a tattoo of the world (quite a cheeky little number). All told, a very entertaining evening.

On a glorious sunny Sunday morning, with a favourable breeze and the expectation of a good sail to Bradwell, the fleet departed Brightlingsea. A leisurely afternoon was spent in the sunshine, before repairing later for a traditional roast dinner in the Green Man.

All too soon Monday arrived, and with it the tide, and we needed to return home to Mersea. A great weekend, good weather, a favourable breeze and most of all great company.

Brian Warwick



WMYC at Colne Yacht club



Mersea fleet at Brightlingsea



Motley Crew

Heybridge Pursuit Race Weekend

Date: 2-3 June



Hartley arrives in style

We have had some cold soggy ones, but this year June did indeed turn out to be flaming and for the cruise the weather turned out to be... hot, hot, hot!

After a glorious motor up the Blackwater, we were safely ensconced in Heybridge basin by Friday afternoon. We rafted three deep to accommodate the 20-plus boats expected. There was time for a quick stroll along the canal to top up supplies, as the weekend is generally fairly alcohol intensive. The early contingent seems to be growing year by year and so an impromptu booking was made for dinner at the Jolly Sailor.

Saturday dawned and we made our pilgrimage to the Tiptree cafe for sustenance and general rehydration. A pleasant time was spent basking in the sunshine awaiting the racing contingent. The pursuit race was won by *Dura* and at the celebratory barbecue Alan Mason treated us to a wonderful concert with his tuneful guitar. The weather was perfect and on Sunday, after more rejuvenation from the Tiptree cafe, we prepared for our mass exodus back to Mersea. Another short but pleasurable cruise with our maritime chums.



Christine Lane

Dinner at the Jolly Sailor



Alan Mason entertains



BBQ in full swing

Osea Island Treasure Hunt and BBQ

Date: 1 July



Life's a beach!

There have been several group visits to Osea in recent times, but as far as I'm aware it's 16 years since we ran a quirky event like this (see *Molliette October 2002*). However I'm pleased to say that the response was very gratifying, with 18 boats signing on. Faced with collecting 'sealed orders' and completing a brain-teasing quiz en route, however, this figure was reduced to 12 - plus a brief flypast by Mike and Vicki in *Golden Fleece*, who were on their way to a previous engagement but who supported us anyway.

It was intended to be a fun day and so it proved, with free beer on the finish line and prizes on the beach. Even the sun gods smiled on our picnics and our barbecues. With the 12 strong fleet taking up most of the anchor space off Osea, it was always going to be a challenge to get everyone to and from shore. But this challenge was ably met by Josh and Julian French, who very generously used their dory *Platterpuss* as a high speed taxi. Thank you both.

The prize draw for the mini-keg of beer was won by a delighted Mel and Carol Daniels from *Stargazer*. As for the quiz, 'intended to amuse and keep minds active with extra points awarded for particularly amusing or imaginative answers', this was won by John and Judith Kearin on *Hartley*, with Kevin and Lesley Mullins on *Sea Breeze* second. Wine was consumed. But spare a thought for the solo skipper whose crew deserted him at the last moment. After sailing and anchoring single-handed our man (name and address supplied) gave vent to his frustration by answering the last quiz question of 'I will give up boating ...' with: 'the next time I'm given another b..... questionnaire to do as well!'



Clockwise



Kearins landing

Colin Campbell

Lowestoft and the Suffolk Rivers Cruise Or: 'It won't rain'

Date: 21 July – 1 August



Kittiwake

On Day One, *Breeze*, *Clockwise*, *Hartley*, *Playpen*, *Tipsy Turvy* and *Kittiwake* all set sail (motoring) in a flat calm heading for Lowestoft, stopping on the way at Felixstowe Ferry for the night. The following day it wasn't long before two of the party were in trouble with marine officialdom for sailing between a guard boat and a static rig outside the Deben, resulting in an aggressive bow wave and a wagging finger! The two miscreants escaped unscathed and after an overnight stay at the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club

in Lowestoft, we headed south to Southwold and a warm welcome from the harbour master, Peter Simmons. Two days were spent in Southwold where we enjoyed a seafood lunch on the harbour arm, a wander into town to browse the shops and the first barbeque of the trip, all topped off with a walk to Walberswick for dinner at the Anchor.



Royal Norfolk & Suffolk Yacht Club

The next port of call was Woodbridge and we had a lovely sail up the Deben – such a pretty river – topped off with dinner at The Anchor (not the same one!). The following day the book worms among us attacked the charity shops, those who love clothes emptied Sea Salt and we hurried back to set up the group BBQ. As we worked black clouds gathered to the west and we hastily started to pack up everything. All the while John Kearin sat stoically at the bench table pronouncing that it wouldn't rain – BUT IT DID! By the bucketful - and it didn't stop for two days. The cinema and ice creams beckoned and we saw *Mama Mia*, which cheered us all up. It was still windy the following day as we headed down river. Some stayed at the Ramsholt Arms for the night before heading home, while those more intrepid souls stopped at Levington en-route. All agreed that in spite of the weather we had all had a great time.

Judith Kearin



Leaving Southwold



RN&SYC Dinner

Clacton Airshow Cruise Or: 'It was all Jack's fault'

Date: 18-23 August



Red Arrows at Clacton

I don't quite know how it happened. There were several of us sitting on *Clockwise* and I think Jack was plying us all with alcohol. The conversation went something like this: 'Have you decided where we are going for the Clacton Air Show cruise, Jack?'. Reply: 'No I haven't got a cruise leader yet, any ideas where we could go?'. I looked up the tides as the conversation continued. 'Oh', I say, 'we could take the tide to the Alde and go up to Orford'. Jack: 'Abraham's Bosom is a great place to anchor'. Discussion then went on about where that place is. I suggest that we then could go up to Aldeburgh & Orford. Jack: 'Well done Mel, it seems I now have a cruise leader!'. Well as I hadn't had a good season and had not been in the Ore for some years I said 'Ok'. All I needed to do then was put a notice up in the yacht club and work out the time it would take to get to the entrance of the Ore, one hour before high water, something I would be doing if I went on my own.

Four boats signed up and plans were made as to what I wanted to do, knowing only too well that sailing plans change according to the weather. A nice south-westerly allowed us to sail all the way to the entrance and I couldn't believe it that we arrived within 15 minutes of our planned arrival time. The south-westerly certainly helped the trip, but it was a bit 'rolly' - making it necessary to set a gybe preventer. We motored into the entrance of the Ore as out came Bob & Frances Thomas in their *Maxi*. At the entrance to the Butley river is Abrahams' Bosom. I anchored in 22ft of water a little more north and in the lee of Havergate Island. The tidal range was 3.3M, or 10ft. Perfect, I thought, and invited *Ad Libuton* to tie up alongside. The tide dropped and we must have run aground overnight, but I didn't notice it. I can only guess that the current had edged the two boats towards the shore. Still we only grounded our bows in the soft mud. We noticed this grounding the next day when *Ad Libuton* tried to untie.

'The best laid plans of Mice and Men', as they say, and now sailors have to change their plans. The predicted fresh to strong breeze had changed to gale-force winds. So we decided to pick up a mooring at Orford. Luckily, a phone call was made to the harbour master who suggested that we stay put as there was more shelter in our part of the river and he was not using the launch to ferry people ashore in the gale. This was when I realised we had run aground, but *Ad Libuton* and *Stargazer* were still nice and upright so we rode the storm out tied together in comfort; no lapping of the waves, swinging in the wind etc.

Next morning was a lovely bright day, but with very little wind. A decision the night before was that we would get up early and depart for Shotley. The marina was very good and gave us berths close together and a 'club' discount. That day the crew of *Ad Libuton* decided to walk to Shotley church and view the Commonwealth war graves and the German WW1 graves. The Church is splendid, it commemorates our brave sailors and submariners.

Next day the winds were still very light and it was decided that a visit, via the ferry, to Landguard Fort and Harwich was the entertainment for the day - and a very enjoyable day it was. Thursday was the day of the air show, but wet and windy. *Clockwise* sailed off into the mist. Despite the showers which later changed to sunshine, I had a lovely sail to Clacton Pier where I dropped the hook. The bottom there must be quite hard and *Stargazer* dragged, but fortunately stopped dragging before I pulled the anchor up. Hooray, and a couple of transits were established. Then the boat which was firmly anchored on our arrival decided to drag. Was it him, or was it us? No, my transits were steady but it was still very unnerving. The air show was great in lovely sunshine. There must have been 70 to 80 boats anchored off Clacton Pier. On our departure we saw several Mersea boats watching the show as well.

So it was all Jack's fault that *Stargazer's* crew, and I am assuming the other crews, had a great few days away. It is lovely meeting up with other boats, sharing a few drinks and yarning away the time. Thanks Jack & Sandy.

Mel Daniels



Jack and Sandy on ferry in Harwich Harbour

North Kent Cruise

Date: 15 – 22 September

The boats *Hartley*, *Sea Breeze*, *Clockwise*, *Stargazer*, *Playpen*, *Brinestar* and *Kittiwake* departed Mersea for Chatham Marina on the River Medway. As is usual in a south west wind, sails were raised and set to enjoy what was to be the only part of the journey with a favourable, though light, breeze to the Spitway. Once turned towards the Maplin Channel we were heading into the wind, so sails were lowered, engines started and the boats settled into the journey towards the Medway Estuary, arriving at Chatham mid-afternoon. Knowing we were going to be in Chatham that evening, Medway Cruising Club kindly invited us to a wildlife slide show and talk at their club house, a short distance away in Gillingham (taxied to and from the club house by MCC members). Stunning photographs and good company to finish day one of our trip.

We had a leisurely Sunday morning before meeting up in the Ship and Trades pub to enjoy a traditional Sunday roast. The thing to note about Chatham Marina is that it is close to the Dockside Outlet Centre, the Royal Dockyard and Lifeboat Museum, Rochester and other local amenities. Monday being a warm and sunny day we decided to 'do' the delights of Rochester (a short bus ride away) where we took in the aged architecture, viewed Charles Dickens's Swiss chalet, Restoration House, the Castle and the Cathedral before breaking for lunch in the gardens of the Jolly Knight Pub. We then continued on to view The Guild Hall and spent some time in Baggins Second Hand Book shop (advertised as the biggest in UK) before returning late afternoon to the Marina.

Tuesday morning found the cruisers enjoying coffee and cake aboard *Kittiwake* before moving off to their various choices of venue, some to the Dockyard Museum, and others to the Outlet Centre or back to Rochester, before meeting for dinner later that night. On Wednesday morning we were booked on a tour of Fort Amhurst, a series of underground tunnels dug and fortified as a deterrent from invasion by Napoleon, then utilised as an air raid coordinating centre during WW2. We had a really great tour with Vic, our very knowledgeable tour guide. Pre-dinner drinks, with a G&T the *Kittiwake* way, were enjoyed before dinner at Medway Yacht Club.

Thursday should have seen some boats returning to Mersea and the rest sailing to Ramsgate. But a band of strong winds predicted to last until Saturday prevented this. Not to be defeated by the interruption to our programme, this intrepid band of 'Mersea Mariners' set off to enjoy more of the delights of Medway - with a trip to the cinema for some, more time in the Dockyard for others, and drinks on *Hartley* for everyone! Friday continued with more of the same (proving that if you are storm bound Chatham Marina is a good place to be storm bound in) with a last evening group meal at the Broadwick restaurant completing a really great week.

Brian Warwick



Tollesbury Rally and Pursuit Race

Date: 13-14 October



Ross, Julia and John

Storm Callum was not expected to reach the south east, but we certainly had a good fresh breeze on the way to Tollesbury. I noted 31kts on our windex. This together with the sun directly in our eyes motoring down Woodrolfe Creek made for quite an interesting trip. We all (16 boats) had our berths allocated the day before by Rob the assistant harbour master, which was very useful.

Three boats opted to race round the buoys, before entering the marina. *Odessa* was the winner, followed by *Rimfire* and *Moondancer*. They had a great, but challenging, race due to the weather. *Hartley* impressed us all by reversing into her berth allowing her to be head to wind. The crews of *Matilda*, *Sea Weasle*, *Tamerisk* and recently sold *Chipper Too* all managed to drive round to join in the fun.

We all met up in the bar to socialise before an excellent meal. Altogether 48 people were there - well done to the restaurant's chef and staff for their efficient delivery of the different meal choices. After dinner there were a few minutes of speeches. The winner of the race was announced and presented with a bottle of wine. The evening ended by returning to socialising at the bar and gatherings on various boats.

Sunday morning many of us gathered for breakfast before making preparations for our rather wet trip back to Mersea. Sadly this was the last cruise in company of the very successful 2018 season.

Mel Daniels



Beryl tucks in



Dave and Debbie



End of cruising dinner

Amazon Journey

By **Wendy Bolton** – winner of the 2017 Reeve Tyler Trophy

It all began in June when over a gin and tonic with Tony and Chuffy Merewether on their Sun Odyssey 389, *Amazon* we volunteered to be her return delivery crew from the West Country later that summer.

The trip started with a long, tortuous car journey to my brother's house near Plymouth, spending most of the time staring at other stationery or slow-moving traffic and being drenched with rain and more rain - the A38 was akin to the Stood at high water. Next morning, views were shrouded in wet stuff. Undaunted, we set off to meet Tony, load our gear and then cheerfully watch the ever-falling rain from Mountbatten Marina's Bridge Bar, whilst planning the trip back. We decided to hedge-hop along the English coast, taking things easy, rather than make long days by going to Cherbourg and running along the French coast before crossing to Ramsgate.

We took the ferry to Plymouth Barbican to explore. Sadly, the tours round the Plymouth Gin Distillery (is there a burgeoning theme here?) were all booked, so instead we paddled round the Barbican and up to the Hoe. Still raining when we arrived back on board, so the evening's sharpener of (you guessed it) G&T was enjoyed below in the dry before supper at the Bridge. Bed early - the real stuff was about to start.



Wind: 15-18 knots, SW
Visibility: Good
Sea State: Moderate
Distance: 36 NM

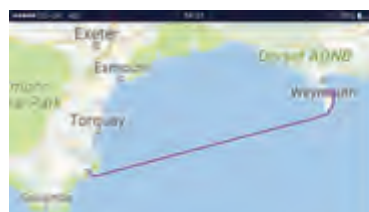
Sunday, 30 July – Plymouth to Dartmouth

We cast off at 07.30. Astonishingly there was no rain, only broken cloud with some sun - a good start. Tony at the wheel, we left the marina, sailed into Plymouth Sound and out past the breakwater. This was new territory for me. It was a beautiful day as we made our way to Start Point, the first of the headlands we were to encounter. But here was a nasty quartering sea, making us uncomfortable, chilly and quiet in the cockpit before we rounded Start Point into more sheltered water for the final sail into Dartmouth.

After the rain of the previous days, we had sailed all day in the dry with sunshine beating down. The sea was a bit nasty at times, but the day overall had been pretty wonderful and a great start to the trip.

Going into Dartmouth, Tony recommended Dartmouth Marina, promising amazing views of the steam train that came in to the station next to it. No berths available, we rafted in the visitors' area on the Kingswear side of the river, in sight of the steam train. Coincidence kicked in here, as we met up with friends of Tony who we knew from a stint on the Medway Regatta committee boat.

A long passage was planned for the next day, and we needed the tide to take us round Portland Bill. So after showers (hot, not rain) and supper in Dartmouth it was back to the boat and straight to bed - with alarms set for 05.00.



Wind: 20 knots, SW
Visibility: Good
Sea State: Smooth
Distance: 52 NM

Monday, 31st July – Dartmouth to Portland

We were away by 05.30, leaving the entrance to Dartmouth with no rain and going out to be met by a brilliant sunrise. With sunshine and clear skies, we had a good breeze to get us to Portland. Another lovely day on the water, encountering dolphins on the way to an impressive rounding just 200m off the end of Portland Bill. Marvellous.



Blue skies - finally!

We sailed down the east side of Portland Harbour, getting permission to use the East Entrance rather than go all the way to the North Entrance - a good move, as that part of the harbour was full of over 100 Optimists taking part in National Championships. Developed to cater for the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, the marina turned out to be a great place for a short overnight stop. Moored up by 14.30, there was time to stock up on ship's stores. Back on *Amazon*, some clearing up and tea. After showers, we gathered back in the cockpit in a super warm evening for G&Ts and a planning meeting.



Portland Bill

We'd had two great days of sailing with clement weather, and the next day looked good again - but the following three days promised 30kts of wind and torrential rain. Shelter for a few days beckoned, so we decided to head for Gosport and the delights of Portsmouth Historic Dockyard - to keep safe and occupied.

Tuesday, 1st August – Portland to Gosport

Ready to go at 07.30, we put up the main in the harbour and left by the East exit. The sea was a bit lumpy for the autohelm, so Brian took the wheel until we reached St Albans Head, where we turned north east to cross the bay. For a while the seas were much smoother, so on went the auto-pilot and it was time for lunch. Another fabulous day's weather and glorious sailing.

We passed the Needles and headed onwards to Hurst Races, where very confused seas made for an exciting entry into the Solent. It was Cowes Week, but little was going on as we passed up the west channel and past Cowes seaport, where we spotted the last of the day's boats crossing the finish line.

After passing the first of the Solent forts we entered into Gosport and moored up in Haslar Marina. We tidied up, showered, indulged in G&Ts in the cockpit, and had dinner in Gosport's answer to Levington Lightship. After a long day, we went back to the boat and bedded down for the night - no alarms were set as we expected to be there for a few days.

Wednesday, 2nd August – Friday, 4th August- Gosport and Portsmouth

Woke up next day to a horrible morning, torrential rain and little visibility, so we elected to lie in till 10.00 and then enjoy a late breakfast. We then got the ferry across to

Portsmouth. We were confident that's where we were going. But in limited visibility you couldn't see much, nor past the harbour entrance and certainly there was no sign of the Isle of Wight.

Sporting oilies, we strolled to the Historic Dockyard, got very wet, paid our entry fee, set off to the *Mary Rose* and joined a long entry queue. I was amazed at this incredible exhibition - still more to see after three hours. Still raining, we walked through the Royal Navy Museum to *HMS Warrior* - superb. Back to the ferry via the Co-op for emergency rations, and home to *Amazon* in time for G&Ts below in the dry. Then down to the other end of Haslar and Hardy's Restaurant for supper, where a large table was taken up by the Greenings Clipper race crew, the Clipper yachts and Volvo Yachts being in the Camper & Nicholson marina next door.

The next morning it was blowing 30+ kts, with no rain. So back we went to the Dockyard, this time for the Jutland exhibition and a look round Boathouse 4, a working museum, before visiting *HMS Victory*.



Victory

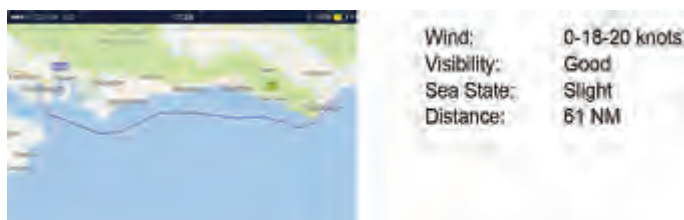
Satisfied with our second day marooned in Gosport, we made our way back, staying aboard for G&Ts and supper. A hard life.

We decided to wait another day for the weather to change in our favour: the wind had eased but wasn't good for heading east. The Dockyard beckoned, and we spent the morning in the Submarine Museum, where as Tony's father was a submarine captain, the visit to *HMS Alliance* was special. Taking the Dockyard ferry to Portsmouth, we visited *HMS M33*, a "tin" gunboat that had served in Gallipoli. An amazing bit of kit, with a rather sobering history, she remarkably came home with her original crew intact plus two dogs, a litter of puppies and a cat.

A short walk outside took us to the Spinnaker Tower and straight up to the viewing gallery, with amazing views all round. And of course, I had to stand on the glass floor and look down. After a quick look round Gunwharf Quay, we went via the Co-op (gin rations had expired) to the ferry and *Amazon* for showers, G&Ts in the cockpit and supper in the Lightship.

By this point *Amazon's* holding tank, which had done a

sterling job during our extended stay in Gosport, decided enough was getting close to enough, and we all became very conscious of the need to be frugal with our use of the heads.



Saturday, 4th August – Gosport to Eastbourne

Set off at 07.00 on a sunny morning but with little wind. Motoring out of the Solent, opening the holding tank, and aiming to go through the Loo Channel (no pun intended) with the tide. Round Selsey Bill, on past Worthing and Brighton – quite far out to round Beachy Head, which we surged past in rough seas at 12.5kts.

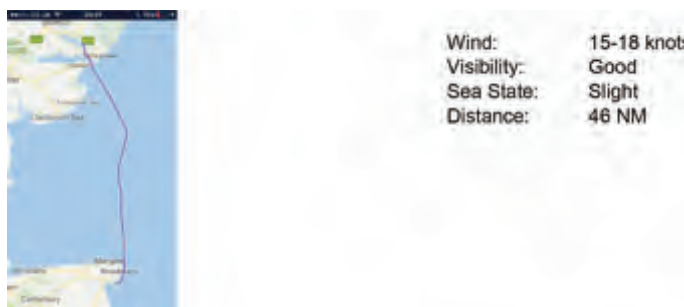
Reaching Eastbourne, we'd just tied up when the skies opened with an awesome thunderstorm with lots of stair-rod rain and lightning. Luckily it dried up within 15 minutes, so we could tidy *Amazon*, shower and descend on G&Ts in the cockpit before supper in the Simply Italian restaurant in the harbour (when we deviated from gin to grappa and coffee).



Sunday, 6th August – Eastbourne to Ramsgate

Locking out of Eastbourne at 08.00, we set off across the bay to Dover, round Dungeness headland where the shore in front of the power station was crowded with fishermen. Interestingly, as we approached Dover, the ferries ganged up on us - one was going in, three were coming out, followed by the Dunkirk Ferry.

Continuing north up the inside route to Ramsgate, we were in a berth by 17.00. Only one G&T in the cockpit, then a walk up to the Royal Temple Yacht Club for another followed by supper.



Monday, 7th August – Ramsgate to Levington

There was no rush to get going next day, so breakfast on the quay before leaving at 10.15, making our way past Ramsgate, the Kent coast and North Foreland, going via Foulgars Gap, through the wind farm to NE Gunfleet and



Windfarm

into Harwich. Finally, the cranes at Felixtowe were passed, and *Amazon* was nearly home. We reached Levington and were tucked up in her berth by 16.30. We tidied the boat, packed our bags, and repaired to the cockpit for a final G&T and to await Chuffy and our lift home.

We'd had a great time and some adventures on the way: 'swimming' on the A38, going around all those famous headlands, ferry dodging at Dover and sailing through the wind farm.

We'd also learnt and re-learnt some lessons: avoid Stonehenge if travelling by car, deck shoes aren't waterproof (nor are jeans), Plymouth rain is very wet, don't forget the Sturgeson, find good shelter with something to do if the weather turns nasty, hold on to the boat in choppy weather, be careful with the holding tank (!) ... and don't run out of gin, or tonic.



North Foreland

Lawn Life

By Maggie Haddow



Disclaimer: In order to protect the innocent (and keep some friends), the author wishes to make it clear that none of the people in the photo are referred to in this article

Ah, the lawn. Aren't we lucky having a Yacht Club lawn? And such a lawn! Space to stretch out and catch some summertime rays, an ideal place to watch the setting sun at any time of the year and the only place to be seen after Mersea Week racing. It is also where we become objects of mild curiosity to passing tourists, like slightly unusual but not hugely interesting animals in a zoo enclosure. So perhaps you should internally assume the slow, breathy tones of David Attenborough narrating 'The Blue Planet' as you read on.

The lawn is the best possible place to model your expensive sailing gear, even if its pristine state shows that you rarely go near the water. After all, why else would you splash nearly £300 on a pair of sailing boots unless it's to casually put your feet up on the arm of a chair and show them off? Or spend huge dollops of cash on a flashy sailing jacket with big numbers sewn on to it (a mystifying trend) unless you then walk about with the collar turned up, looking really yachty? Actually,

these sailing fashion wearers fall mainly into three distinct categories. There is the no-expense-spared, named-brands-only, labels-on-the-outside devotee, who spends a fortune on their gear but hates to get it wet or (horror of horrors) dirty. Then there is the 'I'm extremely casual and quite cool' type, who looks as if they have just selected items at random from the lost property box. They cultivate a salt-stained, world-weary air, which says: 'I know my boat; after all, I sailed it single-handed to Buenos Aires with only a box of Bounties and a bottle of Tizer from the Poundshop.' And then there are those who fall somewhere in between (and who are old enough to know better) who wear long shorts, and maybe a reversed baseball cap (oh dear). If you're really unlucky, there may also be a T-shirt that says something like: 'Good sailors never grow old; they just get a little dinghy,' or 'Ship happens,' or 'I'm not fat, I'm ballast.' Oh, how we laugh.

Of course, there are other lawn statements. Like the fit young men who unzip their wetsuits to waist level,

shrugging them back to display tanned torsos, and the young ladies who chat to them while casually tossing carefully tumbled masses of sun-lightened locks. And then there are the folk with a somewhat underdeveloped fashion sense, wearing two-year-old Mersea Week t-shirts, or stripey tops of many hues. Raising the sartorial bar somewhat, summer lunchtimes can bring out a rash of red-trouser wearers, maybe even sporting the odd blazer and cravat. Exiting from the clubhouse with a large G&T in hand, one of these gimlet-eyed grandees will spot a spare table in the far distance and advance upon it with the conviction of a heat-seeking missile, leaving rivals shrinking without trace. Accompanied by their like-minded friends and smartly dressed spouses, they are there to enjoy a proper meal, to be lingered over with a good bottle of wine and the promise of a long sleep in the heat of the afternoon (taken at home, of course; you never find these big beasts napping in the undergrowth).

Fashion aside, the lawn is a space for all. There are the kids, playing on the tree, swinging on the tyre, begging for crisps and running shouting between tables until mum or dad shush them or threaten them with home. There are the dogs, waiting patiently under tables for a chip to fall, or trying by the force of puppy-eyed willpower to make you hand over your steak. Talking about chips, have you ever ordered a bowl of chips when you're out on the lawn? Friends that you never knew you had will suddenly materialise: 'Oh, can I just have one? Can I dip it in your mayonnaise?'. And so it goes on until all that's left are two little green-tinged crispy ones at the bottom that no-one else wants.

But smart or casual, old or young, an afternoon on the lawn often ends the same way for all. Someone will suddenly slap the person next to them smartly on the arm or thigh, and the cry will go up, 'They're biting!'. Then the assembled company will pick up plates, glasses, knives and forks and, most importantly, bottles, and scuttle into the clubhouse - leaving the darkening lawn to the savage Mersea Mozzies, until a new summer's day dawns and it's time to do it all again.

Committee Members 2018

Commodore:	Ian Shay
Sailing:	Paul Jackson (Vice-Commodore) Tim Hurst (Hon Sailing Secretary) Jack Davis (Cruising representative) Richard Taylor BaCASA/Mersea Haven Rep
House:	Alan Jones (Rear Commodore) Linda Kent, John Clifton, Robert Hill, Tom Fleetwood, John Munns, Richard Bailey
Moorings & Boatyard:	Malcolm Clark (Rear Commodore) Richard Sharpe (Hon Bo'sun) Julian French
Honorary Secretary:	Tim Wood

In Memorium

Jenny Pyle passed away on 17th November 2017
Jenny was a member of the club since 1973.

Pipyn Evens passed away in December 2017.
Pipyn was a long serving member of the club since 1953.

Jack Tinson passed away on January 25th 2018.
Jack was a long serving member of the club since 1947.

Ronald Trayling passed away on 24th May 2018.
Ronald was a member of the club since 1991.

Sam Lightfoot passed away on 24th June 2018.
Sam was a member of the club since 2014.

Joan Morrison passed away on 24th June 2018.
Joan was a member of the club since 1998.

Olive Free passed away on 7th July 2018.
Olive was a member of the club since 2000.

Shirley Greville passed away on 13th August 2018.
Shirley was a long serving member of the club since 1963.

David Brook passed away in August 2018.
David was a long serving member of the club since 1954.

Alison Clark passed away on 24th October 2018.
Alison was a member of the club since 2001.

New Members 2018

Full Members

David Body
David Brame
(*Serenity*)
Christopher Brown
Michael Butler
Georgie Butler
(*Stealaway*)
Colin Clamp
Steven Cooper
Christine Cooper
(*Double Trouble*)
Chris Dix
Nic Evans
(*Seren Glas*)
Steven Glen
(*Renegade*)
James Harrison
(*Ricochet*)
John Harrison
Maria Harrison
(*Lady Caroline*)
Ashley Hinge
(*Velocity*)
Philip Houghton
Robert Lloyd
Lynda Lloyd
(*Sand Hopper*)
David Thomas
(*Wind Gather*)
Terry Thurgood
David Willey
Elizabeth Willey
(*Living Water*)

Associate Members

Hilary Body
Ross Bowman
Kellie Burgin
Sheila Byrne
Steven Daniels
Sarah Daniels
Karen Evans
Liz Fox
Julian French
Natasha French
Simon Hurst
Julian Jones
Christine Ladd
Clare Lee
Lisa Montgomerie
David Morton
Hubert Seifert
Ceiron Simmons
Emma Simmons
Jill Thompson
Lisa Thurgood
Nicola Vince
Jason Whiting
Michelle Whiting
Ewen Wilson
John Young

Crew Members

Harry Gozzett
Oliver Gozzett
Emily Harris

Cadet Members

Sophie Brame
Danny Brame
Lauren Brame
Cameron Dix
Charlie Pearce
Tom Struth
Amy Struth

Sailing Honours 2018

HUMDINGER

Julian Lord

1st Taxi Lewis Salver
(Club Championship)
1st Quest Trophy
(Spring Series)
1st Cirdan Trophy
1st Ancient Mariners Salver
1st Wallet Cup
2nd Knight Hall Trophy
(Autumn Series)
2nd Lewis Powell Cup
2nd Ellis Cup
2nd Peter Vince Trophy

GOLDEN FLEECE

Michael Wheeler

1st EAORA Plaque
1st RORC Salver
1st Perkins Cup
1st Buckley Goblets
1st Lawson Trophy

BLACKJAC

Jack Davis

1st Lewis Powell Cup
1st Coronation Cup
2nd Taxi Lewis Salver
(Club Championship)
2nd Cirdan Trophy
3rd Autumn Trophy
3rd Quest Trophy
(Spring Series)

BANANAMAN

Bruce Woodcock &

Joe Billing

2nd Quest Trophy
(Spring Series)
3rd Taxi Lewis Salver
(Club Championship)

BEAR

Steve Johnson

1st Finola Cup
2nd Wallet Cup
3rd Coronation Cup

RIMFIRE

Richard & Sue Taylor

1st Blackwater Trophy
(The White Sail Series)
2nd Coronation Cup

OYSTERCATCHER XXX1

Richard Matthews

1st Peter Vince Trophy

ALGONQUIN

Barry Ashmore

2nd Autumn Trophy

STARFALL II

John Clifton

2nd Ancient Mariners Salver

HANNELORE

David Curtis

2nd Blackwater Trophy
(White Sail Series)

ODESSA

Malcolm Clark

2nd Finola Cup

PIPE DREAM

James Millar

3rd Wallet Cup

CLOCKWISE

Jack Davis

3rd Ancient Mariners Salver

LAHLOO

Richard Bailey

3rd Finola Cup

ANY OLD EXCUSE

Stuart Bradshaw

3rd Martini Trophy
(IRC Sportsboat Series)

COLLETTE

Ian Low

Reeve Tyler Trophy (best cruising log)

Richard Taylor

Carrington Cup



Inside back: A Mersea Week coming together. Picture by Chrissie Westgate

Back cover: Salcott scene . Picture by John Davison



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