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The annual journal of the WEST MERSEA YACHT CLUB Founded 1899

December 2019



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Front cover: 'Team Reedy' on *Tramp* during Mersea Week

Inside front: Still waters. Mark Farthing on *Jack*



From the Commodore

By Ian Shay

As I sit and reflect on my second, and final, year as Commodore I am drawn once again to mentioning the weather. Who can forget Mersea Week's contrasts - flat calm on Monday with horrendous wind and rain only two days later?

Our offshore racers competing in the EAORA series and in the Fastnet also experienced some very challenging conditions. But the club was well represented, with four member boats competing in the series and three in the Fastnet, with very creditable results. Well done indeed to all our members who took part.

Richard Matthews had a dominant EAORA series, winning six firsts with *Oystercatcher XXXIII* to take the overall championship. Michael Wheeler had two firsts in Golden Fleece to win his class and come third overall. The club's best result came in the Buckley Goblets, with a clean sweep of *Oystercatcher* first with second and third places going to *Golden Fleece* and John Munns's *Dark Horse*.

Oystercatcher and *Golden Fleece* competed in the Rolex Fastnet race, together with Ben Morris in *Lulotte*, in conditions that saw 62 boats out of 388 retire. *Oystercatcher* finished 17th in the IRC class Z and *Golden Fleece* 43rd in Class IRC4. *Lulotte* won the Sparkman and Stephens Trophy.

In home waters, a very successful Cadet Week was supported by 160 young sailors revelling in the pirate theme for this year. This event, one of the biggest in the country, has been running since 1935. Such a large programme would not be possible without the huge effort made by the Cadet week Committee and an army of hard working volunteers.

Mersea Week was held in the windiest weather we have seen for many years,

with near gale force gusts on the first day and on the final day's racing. The club's Regatta just finished before yet more wet and windy weather came in. Over the week the full programme of keelboat racing was completed, but some dinghy and MFOB races were lost. Thanks go to all our staff together with Race officers Brian Bolton and Peter Fitt and their teams, the Mersea Week Committee and all the volunteers who all contribute to the success of the week. During the week we again ran the RNLI Charity Race, raising an excellent sum of just over £800 for our local lifeboat. On the same day the MFOBs managed to race for the first Sam Lightfoot Memorial Trophy despite the weather - and had a lot of fun afterwards. We were delighted that Sam's parents were there to present the trophy.

For many decades the club has prided itself as being one of the prominent racing venues on the East Coast, but like many clubs locally and nationally is suffering a serious decline in participation. To try and address this decline the Sailing Committee made a number of changes for the 2019 season. In particular we moved from local handicap racing to IRC racing and introduced Sunday afternoon starts. In addition, sailors' suppers were provided after racing on Sundays. Despite these initiatives the IRC fleet numbers continued to decline. On the positive side, individual trophy races were well supported and the White Sail Fleet had a good season. The MFOBs go from strength to strength providing the perfect mix between competitive racing and a strong social calendar. They had a cracking season, averaging 10 boats per race almost every weekend between May and November.

The cruising fraternity also made the most of the season, enjoying good weather for eight of their nine cruises - including three weeks of continuous

sunshine on the French trip. The Sailing Committee have been busy preparing a programme for 2020. Please participate and help them provide the racing you want. The cruising programme is already available on our website.

Finally I would like to say a few words about the volunteers who make all this activity possible. In 2020 Brian and Wendy Bolton will be stepping back to do other things. The club owes them a huge debt of gratitude for all the years they have devoted to managing our racing. We greatly need new volunteers to replace all their efforts and if you are willing to help please contact the Sailing Committee.

The House team has faced a challenging time and we are now employing our third chef in a year. Despite this and other staffing difficulties, a full social programme has been run with some notable successes, particularly the themed evenings.

The Moorings and Boatyard team have run an efficient and user-friendly launch service. YC2 has been running well after a few initial problems with her new engine and propeller and YC1 is to undergo repairs to her hull this winter and also requires a new engine.

Despite the economic and political uncertainties our club continues to thrive and to attract new members, while some other clubs are struggling to survive. This would not be the case but for the hard work and dedication of all our staff. Managing the Club is very much a team effort and I am very grateful to all the Flag Officers, Officers, members of the General Committee and all the other volunteers who have given freely of their time to help keep the ship on course.

A very Happy Christmas to you all and fair winds for good sailing in 2020.

Fastnet - Fast!

By Richard Matthews



Oystercatcher XXXIII rounds the Rock

The main focus for this season was always going to be the Fastnet Race. It would be 50 years since I had first sailed in the race and so wanted to do it on a boat that could make an impact.

After looking around I bought the Ker 51 *Tonnerre 4* from well known Dutch yachtsman Peter Vroon. *Tonnerre* had been laid up under cover for over a year, her owner now in his 80's effectively having retired from sailing after many years of successful inshore and offshore racing.

The Ker had an impressive record, having raced successfully in the Sydney-Hobart, Transpac, Transatlantic, Around Britain and many other offshore and inshore events. She came with two keel bulbs and a container

full of sails, so we opted for her original lighter keel bulb and the smaller practically unused offshore mainsail. We painted her black hull white and renamed her *Oystercatcher XXXIII*, the latest in my line of racing yachts going back to 1978. While we were preparing the yacht for the season, I was approached by a buyer who had apparently had been pipped at the post when I bought the yacht. American John Raymont from Newport Beach, California particularly wanted the yacht for the Transpac race and I agreed terms to sell her to him at the end of the UK season.

The boat was a joy to sail - and very fast. As well as all the gear, we inherited the previous owner's son, Carlo Vroon, as crew along with another "Cloggy" Yves De Block who

both knew the yacht and were highly capable racers. We harvested a crew who had all raced with us on previous *Oystercatchers* including WMYC members Alan Brook, Erik Ellis, Hamish Cock, Saskia Clark, Peter Bessey, Drummond Sydenham and Seamus Clifford. Occasional crew included other YC members John Davison, "Wiggy" Williamson, Mark Barry and Steve and Debs Johnson.

We did well in the RORC North Sea race, our first racing outing, taking line honours and a third overall. We might have done better had RORC not set a course that allowed two opportunists to sail through the Galloper wind farm. This cut a corner but in our opinion was fundamentally unseamanlike. As we got to know the yacht we came to appreciate her power and off-wind



since the tragic 1979 Fastnet, in which Alan Brook and I had sailed, and actually 50 years since Alan and I did our very first Fastnet together as fledgling crew aboard former WMYC commodore David Powell's Mersea Oyster.

The race started in moderate breeze and unusually gave the fleet a reach out of the Solent and down channel, allowing most of the fleet to easily pass the first usual hurdle of the Portland Bill tide gate. We were well placed in the top 10 with a fast reach for the first few hours, but as forecast we sailed into a calm. Awaiting a new breeze during the small hours just off Plymouth, we stalled in the transition zone and several of the larger yachts in our class got away into the new breeze.

By the time we reached the Scillies, it was starting to blow and at this point our fractional hoist 'Code Zero' reacher decided to retire itself, disintegrating with a bang like cannon. There followed a classic Irish Sea Fastnet, with the wind building and gusting to Force 7. The good news being that we were still able to steer more or less direct for the Rock.

We rounded the Fastnet at dawn on the second day, Alan Brook was on the helm and as always it was a heart stopping moment when I called us in

to pass close by the rock, with the roar of breaking water close to leeward. There was a Rolex photo boat under our bow which captured the rounding. For the following hour we had to remain close hauled to clear the exclusion zone set up in place of the previous spreader mark. Soon after rounding we had a call from a friendly Irish Coastguard helicopter, telling us that several of our lifejacket EPIRBs were transmitting. They may have been water-activated, but soon switched off, and it was good to know they worked anyway.

Once clear of the exclusion zone it was sheets eased and reaching back towards the Scillies at 16-18 knots. As good as it was this was where we really missed the defunct Code Zero, which would have given us at least an extra knot of boat speed - probably more. Nevertheless, it was a great sail and once past the Scillies we had a fast VMG run under heavy chute to the finish at Plymouth.

We were 30th overall from 333 starters. With hindsight, if we'd made a better job getting through into the new breeze on the first night and if we hadn't blown out our reaching chute we would have done better. It was a tough race but a fast one, just two and half days at an average speed of 10.3 knots for over 600 miles - certainly my fastest ever.

speed, equalling or bettering wind speed up to around 14 knots.

We opted to participate in the EAORA series, this year celebrating its 70th anniversary, as the best way to build some pre-Fastnet offshore experience and we all enjoyed getting back to some East Coast passage racing. We ended up winning the EAORA overall championship, which for me was the seventh time. Sure, many of us remember the glory days with fifty boat fleets, but there is still a core of enthusiasm for East Anglian racing and it was good to be back. Oystercatcher's 12ft 4in draft was a constant challenge and we were grateful to EAORA race management, who made every effort to set courses where we could float.

The Fastnet was my 23rd - 40 years



Alan Brook at the helm points Seamus Clifford and Hamish Cock trimming

All the crew were superb and on a personal note I was proud to be awarded the RORC Dennis Doyle trophy for the skipper with the most (23) Fastnets. I'm already planning a new campaign for the next one in 2021.

Our last race with *Oystercatcher* was back to the East Coast for the Buckley Goblets, the final EAORA race of the series. We invited John Raymont and five of his crew from the USA to join us for this one. These guys had recently completed the Transpac in the owner's previous boat, so it was an opportunity for us to meet new friends and introduce them to racing the yacht. As it turned out the race to Ostend was one of the high points of the entire season - with a reach followed by fetch across the North Sea in a full breeze. We completed the 90 mile course in a record 6 hrs 9 mins, averaging close to 14.5 knots. We won the race, my 15th Goblets win, by over an hour on handicap. With the exception of 10 minutes, I helmed the whole way across with a grin from ear to ear. This was champagne sailing with bells on and was the last time I was to sail the yacht. Even the hour and half waiting for depth at Ostend didn't spoil a magic, memory book sail.

The rest of an 'amazing season' – seven more regattas in four different yachts

We started the season by shipping the 37-foot Stephen Thomas designed *Holding Pattern* from the UK to



Champagne sailing. *Holding Pattern* off St Barth



'Ready about'. *Midnight* racing off Antigua

Antigua in February. I was the original owner, sold her to a friend five years ago, and bought her back hoping she would be ideal for some Caribbean racing. I actually repurchased *Holding Pattern* in the same week that I bought *Oystercatcher XXXIII*. Two yachts in one week, my wife Denette was worried I was losing the plot!

Our first event, the BVI Regatta, was a disaster. The wind never got above six knots and we soon discovered that *Holding Pattern* was hopeless in very light airs. Happily, most Caribbean sailing is in trade wind conditions and at the Voile St Barths event we won our first race. As soon as the wind went above 14 knots *Holding Pattern*

sailed well and proved to be progressively more competitive as the wind increased.

We were happy to win two races in Antigua Sailing Week, but failed to win the week by one place against a well worked-up local boat with a fully optimized CSA, (Caribbean Sailing Association) rating. *Holding Pattern* remained in Antigua and we plan to race her again next spring. Meanwhile Geoff Hunt will be flying to Antigua to trim 10% off the keel bulb, which we hope will give us better performance in light airs and perhaps more downwind speed.

In early April we raced our lovely 82-footer *Midnight* in the Oyster Antigua Regatta. I was privileged to welcome the return of 20-plus Oyster yachts that had arrived in Antigua, having completed a circumnavigation. As much as anything, our participation in the regatta was to join that fleet. We had a photographer aboard for one race, who had recently completed the Volvo Ocean race as on board photographer. He was a highly skilled drone pilot and got us some fabulous shots of *Midnight* racing with spinnaker.

Following the Fastnet came Mersea Week in *Decoy*, my Cork 1720, racing in an active IRC sport boat fleet. In race one, we were stretching away from the fleet nicely with 18 knots on the clock



from Croatia to serve as our mother ship.

Racing in these classic regattas takes place under the French CIM rating rule, for which we replaced our winches with handybillies for a 2% rating advantage. *Kismet's* crew had a day of practice before the regattas, including sail changes and reefing, which proved especially valuable in the final race when the forecast wind of 15 knots freshened to 30-35 knots. With a series of headsail changes and double reefed mainsail, *Kismet* stretched away to win by eight minutes and score second place overall in the 20-yacht Regatte Royale classic gaff yacht fleet.

The Voiles St Tropez races were typically delayed awaiting breeze and started in 5-6 knots which freshened during the day. *Kismet* showed excellent speed reaching under a huge

155% overlapping genoa, but struggled on the upwind legs. On race two *Kismet* was well behind and our tactician, Olympic gold medalist Saskia Clark, opted to break away from the fleet taking her in an entirely different direction, looking for a new breeze. This risky call paid off handsomely, with *Kismet* laying the finishing line off St Tropez in a fresh new breeze with the rest of the fleet dead downwind still hunting for breeze.

Kismet won her class in St Tropez with a 1, 1, 3 score line and has now returned safely home to Fox's via Antibes and a truck across France without incident. On the same trip last year, the boat arrived at the French crossing port with 12 illegal stowaways who had somehow got aboard during the transit. *Kismet's* next adventure will be a special regatta for Fife yachts in Largs, Scotland next June.

when the auto reef feature activated itself, otherwise known as a dismasting. With the cooperation of the race committee we hurriedly recommissioned my Melges 24 which I hadn't sailed for a few years. We found good speed during the regatta, winning the final race by 13 seconds and the week and on countback.

In September, with her varnish glistening and her bottom freshly painted, we trucked *Kismet* my 48ft William Fife designed and built gaff cutter, to the South of France to race in the Regatte Royale in Cannes and the Voile St Tropez regattas. The boat is now 121 years old - it's hard to believe that Queen Victoria was on the throne when she was first launched. Meanwhile *Midnight* had sailed up



Plenty of action for mainsheet man Hamish Cock on *Kismet*

Results Summary 2018

Voile St Barths	Holding Pattern	CSA 4	1 x 1st & 2nd overall
Antigua Sailing Week	Holding Pattern	CSA 5	2 x 1st & 2nd overall
Oyster Antigua Regatta	Midnight		3rd in class
Levington Classic Regatta	Scorpio		1 x 1st & 2nd in class
RORC North Sea Race	Oystercatcher XXX111		Line Honours 3rd overall
EAORA Janes Cup	Oystercatcher XXX111		1st Class 1 & 1st overall
EAORA Thames Estuary	Oystercatcher XXX111		1st Class 1 & 1st overall
EAORA Cannon Ball Trophy	Oystercatcher XXX111		1st Class 1 & 1st overall
EAORA Thames Estuary	Oystercatcher XXX111		1st Class 1 & 1st overall
EAORA Buckley Goblets	Oystercatcher XXX111		1st Class 1 & 1st overall
EAORA 2019 Championship	Oystercatcher XXX111		1st Class 1 & 1st overall
RORC Fastnet	Oystercatcher XXX111		Dennis Doyle Trophy
Mersea Week Sport Boats	What a Blast		1st overall
Regatte Royale Cannes	Kismet		1 x 1st & 2nd class overall
Voile St Tropez	Kismet		2 x 1st and 1st in class overall

Fastnet - 50 years on

By David Powell, former WMYC Commodore

'OYSTER' BEATING TO WINDWARD



D. M. Powell's ocean-racer Mersea Oyster beats to windward with spinnaker and crew all set

Daily Express records the 1969 crew at Cowes (spot the deliberate mistake)

At the outbreak of war in September 1939, every leisure boat in Europe was laid up in a hurry. Some in mud berths, others on hard standing or in sheds. After six long years, at the end of the war the surviving owners went back to their yachts.

All those boats were built of wood and had suffered degradation, but those in mud berths fared better because they were damp and the holes were plugged. Those yachts in sheds dried out and took many months to 'take up' afloat. Lots of pumping was needed.

By 1948 racing was underway again, but there were few new boats because of quotas on all new materials. The golden oldies (men and boats) took to the circuits again and the WMYC was at the forefront of offshore racing in these early days, especially in the East Anglian Offshore Racing Association (EAORA) racing – currently celebrating its 70th anniversary year. As many as 50 entries was normal then. Now, sadly, there can be as few as 10 boats in these races.

One of the earliest WMYC yachts back afloat and racing was Alan Baker's *Thalassa* - a 46ft yawl, launched in 1906.

Alan (Commodore 1953-56) was a stalwart in bringing on the young and over 100 people qualified for Royal Ocean Racing Club (RORC) membership by sailing on *Thalassa*.

Since those days approximately 150 WMYC yachts have competed in ocean races and the club won the RORC club points championship for several years in the 1960's and 1970's. Many more times, indeed, than the 'elite' clubs on the south coast!

I was proud to be one of *Thalassa's* '100' and I did my first Fastnet on her in 1955 at the age of 18. From that moment I wanted to win the Fastnet, an ambition never achieved! My best result came in 1961, when I took my father's boat *Galloper* and with Don Pye in the crew (his first Fastnet) we came second in class. Don sadly passed away this year.

Over the years with my own boats I had two 3rd places. In total I completed 21 Fastnets.

Fast forward to 1969 and I bought the American yacht *Rabbit II*, a well known 41ft racing boat, and renamed her

Mersea Oyster. She trialed for the Admiral's Cup team to represent Britain, was first reserve but was not finally selected. In the course of that year's series, however, she beat most of the international team yachts. In the Fastnet, which was part of the series, we finished 6th in class out of 60; and 21st overall out of 180.

Fortunately all six of *Mersea Oyster's* 1969 Fastnet crew are still alive and well, so 50 years later they celebrated the anniversary – meeting for lunch on October 16 at, where else, the WMYC.

They were the youngest crew to sail in the 1969 Fastnet and have gone on to some remarkable sailing feats. No one gets an individual mention here, but between them these sailors have logged up a total of: 79 Fastnets; four Sydney to Hobart Races; two Bermuda Races; 12 Trans Atlantics and one World Circumnavigation, as well as many thousands of miles in other ocean races.

WMYC still figures well in offshore racing. Long may it continue.



The '69 Fastnet Crew this year

Left to Right: David Pertwee, Richard Mathews, Alan Brook, David Powell, Duncan Kay, Michael Evers

Fastnet – Or Bust!

By Michael Wheeler



Golden Fleece loosening up at Classic Regatta

Photo: Chrissie Westgate

It all started at breakfast in the Waterfront Café on the morning after the EAORA Prize Giving Dinner at the WMYC last November. Most of our regular Cowes crew were there, and we decided to meet and discuss what we had been talking about for the past two or three years – entering *Golden Fleece* for the 2019 Rolex Fastnet Race. By the time the bacon and eggs arrived it was a definite 'Yes' from everybody. We were off – subject to qualifying and a green light from partners!

Commitments had to be made for the qualifying races, delivery trips, crew mileage, Sea Survival Courses & First Aid at Sea courses and upgrading personal and boat safety equipment to meet the strict criteria introduced after the tragic 1979 race. We completed 10 EAORA/RORC offshore races with 75% of our Fastnet crew to ensure that we met the crew mileage requirement.

Our Fastnet crew consisted of our son Jason, Richard Fuller, Paul Adams, Philip Woods, Simon Chidgey, Simon Evans and me – four of whom are WMYC Members. Dickie (Richard Fuller) offered to enter us in the race by 'hitting the button' at 1200 hrs on January 7. The race sold out in just over 4 minutes, but a few minutes later I received a call from Dickie to say:

'We are in!'. I thought 'Oh s - - t, we really are going now!'. We entered under the banner of the WMYC and whilst *Golden Fleece* had done the race before in 1975 as part of the South African Admiral's Cup team this was to be my first Fastnet.

From this promising point we started to encounter a series of 'challenges' which made us doubt we would even make it to the start line. Our first scare was Paul Adams, our bowman (we call him 'Biggles' – he used to fly). A month or so before the race he had a heart attack (his second) and then a corrective heart procedure just two weeks before the Fastnet. He got clearance to race, but we joked that I'd better read up on burials at sea. Fortunately this research was not needed.

Between the Fastnet qualifying races we managed to squeeze in the Suffolk Yacht Harbour Classic Regatta on June 22-23. On the second day I was below as we were motoring out to the start when there was an almighty crash and *Golden Fleece* went from six knots to zero in a heartbeat. We had hit a big navigation mark head on, right on the nose - with six guys on deck (don't ask!). We were damaged, but a quick check down below confirmed that there was no water ingress so we

carried on with the race. Over the weekend we achieved a 3rd in Class and 4th Overall out of 26 boats. The next day *Golden Fleece* was lifted out of the water at Levington and a temporary repair was made to make us seaworthy for the 130 mile East Coast Race from West Mersea to Ostende four days later, which was a Fastnet qualifier. We made the race, won our Class and came 4th overall in a competitive fleet. It took us 27 hrs 11 mins. Instead of going ashore in Ostende, we just crossed the finish line at about 2200 hrs on Saturday, turned the boat around and sailed straight back to Mersea. It was a hard few days but it meant that we had qualified for the Fastnet.

After some more EAORA racing, including a win overall, the boat went back to Levington to complete the bow repairs.

Prior to lifting out I had noticed oil in the bilges and asked French Marine to check it. This resulted in the engine coming out and the sump was found to have a hole in it. The heat exchanger and engine mounts needed replacing along with considerable wiring - and it was also discovered that the prop shaft was bent! It was now Fastnet minus 19 days and I was getting concerned.

We had to put back our departure for Cowes by a day and transfer the crew gear and provisions to Levington. Jason, Dickie and I left on the morning of July 27 and had an uneventful trip to Dover. We were planning to take it easy and arrive in Cowes on Monday 29 – five days before the Fastnet start. It didn't work out that way.

At 0800 the next morning we went straight to the fuelling berth in Dover to take on diesel, only to be told that they didn't have any. We ended up getting 20 litres, having been assured that the fuel was fine. Everything was fine until later in the day when the wind began to build and we decided to call in to Eastbourne for the night. About two-and-a-half miles out, the engine stopped and would not start again. The seas were now heavy and so we kept station under reduced sail while we called the Coastguard, who in turn called out the Eastbourne Lifeboat. Seeing the powerful 52ft Tamar Class lifeboat screaming out to us at 27 knots was very impressive. In rough conditions they managed to secure a line and we were towed into Eastbourne. We gave a big 'thank you' to the lifeboat skipper and crew and then had a few beers while we decided what to do next. It was clear that we had contaminated fuel, so the next morning we changed filters and got the engine going.

It was now midday Monday 29 July – Fastnet start minus five days and we were meant to be in Cowes! We filled up with diesel and departed Eastbourne, but half a mile off Beachy Head the engine stopped again. We drifted around for 20 minutes and then tried the engine again – it started and ran for another 30 minutes and then stopped....and so it went on. We decided to struggle into Newhaven, where I hoped we could find a good marine engineer. We were lucky to get in when we did as there was a new weather front coming through with gale force westerly winds forecast – things were not going our way! I contacted Peter Leonard Marine who, after listening to our predicament, dropped everything to undertake fuel cleaning work the next day.

It was now Tuesday 30 July – Fastnet minus 4 days and we were in

Newhaven with no engine. Jason, Dickie and I didn't say, so but we were each worried that we may not make it to the start, meaning that 12 months of planning and preparation would go down the tubes. It didn't bear thinking about.

Two engineers worked on the fuel system all day. The 100 litres of diesel taken onboard the day before was pumped out and disposed of, the fuel filters were changed again, fuel system bled and main fuel tank disconnected. A temporary 30-litre outboard fuel tank was installed in a cockpit locker and two 20-litre fuel cans were lashed in the cockpit. We fired up the engine – and it worked. But it was now blowing SW'ly force 7 outside.

The next morning, July 31, it was still blowing 'old boots'. We walked to the end of the breakwater and saw nothing but huge breaking seas. The Harbourmaster suggested that we stay put and the big windfarm support boats moored next to us were not going anywhere. They invited us onboard for a coffee and we had a chat. By 1030 we convinced ourselves that the wind was easing and as we could not bear the thought of letting the other crew members down, we reefed down and left. Thirty minutes outside the breakwater we understood why the Harbourmaster had suggested that we stay in port! We were crashing through huge seas and it turned out

later that each of us thought about turning back but said nothing. We did compromise, however, and instead of trying to make Cowes in one hit we decided to head for Brighton, not an ideal port to enter in a southerly gale. The seas outside the breakwater were big and confused and the wind was 30kts plus. We were all tense and not a word was spoken as we surfed in through the breakwaters, but once in it was calm and we breathed a huge sigh of relief. We motored slowly into the marina but it was still blowing hard and Hamish the Harbourmaster came down to give us a much-needed hand. He said: 'Welcome to Brighton, what the h - - I were you doing out there anyway?' We were another step closer to Cowes.

The next morning was August 1 – Fastnet start minus two days and the anxiety onboard was real. The wind had dropped and we were up early for an 0600 departure. Within 20 feet of the berth we ran aground in the middle of the marina and were stuck there for nearly two hours, despite having asked to be placed in a deep enough berth the day before. We finally arrived in Cowes at 1400 – three days late, relieved but exhausted and feeling as though we had already 'done' a Fastnet and that whatever the forthcoming race would throw at us it would be a doddle compared to the last five days. How wrong could we be!



Under tow from Eastbourne Lifeboat



Lumpy conditions in the Celtic Sea

Our time was now limited, but Vicki had all the shore-side arrangements and catering in hand. We just made the Skipper's Briefing at 1600 and met up with the rest of the crew. Friday came and went with last minute preparations and our pre-race crew dinner. Saturday August 3 was Race Day - the culmination of 12 months of planning, preparation, qualifying, training and jumping through hoops. We were relieved and thankful that we had made it – albeit only just!

Our start was at 1400. There were 89 boats in our class, but hundreds jockeying for position for their own starts. We had a good start, hoisted our asymmetric at the gun and were soon flying down the Western Solent with the other 387 competitors. It was as exciting as it gets and never to be forgotten. Vicki was watching from the Squadron lawn and was able to easily pick us out by the *Golden Fleece* ram emblem on our spinnaker - it was the first time that she has ever forgiven me for the extravagance of having it painted on the sail. We were powering along just yards from our fellow

competitors and it was easy to think that we were going well at nine knots, until the likes of *Rambler* and *Scallywag* came past, making you feel as though you are standing still! To say nothing of the multihulls, such as *Macif* and *Actual Leader*, winding up to speeds of 35 knots.

Once out of the Solent we saw Richard Matthews's *Oyster Catcher XXXIII* catching us fast and he was also soon gone. We never did see the other WMYC member, Ben Morris, in his 50ft S&S Swan *Lulotte*. But he did well to win the S&S Trophy.

After a frustrating nine-hour calm during the first night a new breeze filled in from the southwest and then the west. By about 0200 on August 5 we were approaching Wolf Rock and planning to leave it to starboard and then go through the Scilly Isles to avoid the inshore traffic zone. However, we were two crew down with mal de mere and struggling to get past Wolf Rock so we turned north, passing between the eastern edge of the Traffic Separation Zone and Lands End,

as did about 50-60 other boats. This was fine, but it cost us about 20 miles before we could turn left and set course for the Rock.

The next 36 hours produced some of the worst conditions that I have experienced in *Golden Fleece* – worse than the Cape Town to Rio Race 20 years ago. The wind and the seas kept building and were relentless – the wind was screaming. We were close hauled and with no spray hood (removed for racing) each wave that we crashed into swept green water along the flush deck into the cockpit, drenching those on watch. For almost two days we had huge seas and 30–35kts of wind, with gusts of 48-50kts and rain squalls like stair rods. With two reefs in the main and a furled genoa the size of a pocket handkerchief, we were still doing 7-8kts. Two full length battens worked their way out of the mainsail and disappeared into the Celtic Sea. We fell off some waves with such force that I feared for the boat's structure and down below everything, including bedding, was in chaos and soaking wet. Fire extinguishers jumped off their brackets, plates flew out of their racks, locker doors sprang open and food was all over the cabin floor. No hot food or drink for two days, just ginger nuts and water, and we grabbed what sleep we could in our heavy weather gear (which was wet inside and out), boots and life jackets. Not every boat experienced the weather that we did, it depended on your position in the race when the front came through. But it was bad for us and many others.

We rounded the Rock at 1049 on August 6 – an emotional moment as we turned to head home. By now the conditions were easing and we were going 'in the right direction'. Spirits were lifted, but we were too exhausted to celebrate with the champagne we had brought for the occasion. I sent a text to Vicki that just said: 'Round – we're coming home!'

By 1200 on August 7 we were through the Scillies and passing Wolf Rock again for Lizard Point and the finish at Plymouth – what a difference a day makes! We had wind on the quarter, the sun was shining, dolphins surfed in our bow wave, our bedding was on deck drying and we warmed up with a



Chaos below

tot of rum. At this rate we would finish this evening. But it was not to be. The wind dropped and we were becalmed all night 10 miles from Plymouth, drifting towards the Eddystone Rock. At first light a breeze picked up, as did our spirits, and we were able to sail again, crossing the Finish Line at 0849, doing 6kts.

There were 388 yachts in the race, out of which 62 retired. In our class there were 89, out of which 23 retired. We came 43rd in class and 233rd overall - but after what we had been though to get to the start line and during the race our biggest reward was finishing.

We all spent the night of Thursday August 8 in Plymouth, in the comfort of a warm, dry hotel. We had completed the Fastnet but we still had to get *Golden Fleece* back to Mersea. The crew had to get back to family and work and left on Friday, but John Hooper and Dee Prior had come to Plymouth to help me sail the boat back to Mersea. However, yet another weather front was coming through and by Saturday it was blowing Force 7 outside and I wasn't setting off in that again. John and Dee only had limited time and could not wait for the weather to clear. In the end I booked the boat into the marina for a week and Vicki and I came home by train, after making arrangements for a delivery crew to bring her home. *Golden Fleece* arrived back in Mersea on August 21. Mission finally accomplished!

We completed the rest of the EAORA series, which saw us secure a Class 3 season's championship win, and a

second overall in the Buckley Goblets. There were more adventures in 'interesting' conditions, but nothing quite like the Fastnet.

On the whole it was a full and challenging year which would not have been possible without the support of my family and crew. In addition to the Fastnet crew, the season would not have happened without support and encouragement from the following: Vicki (Crew Manager), Malcolm Clark, John Davison, Richard Sharpe, Mike Berry, Julian French, Tim Turnbull, Ed Bull, Dave Amass, Richard Bergin and Nick Reay.

Next year I have promised Vicki that there will be less racing and that we will spend more time sitting in the cockpit on the mooring enjoying gin and tonic and fine wine.....we will see!



Crossing the finish line - finally!

Golden Fleece 2019 Results

Ralph Herring Trophy - EAORA	1st Overall
Pattinson Cup - EAORA/WMYC	2nd in Class
Jane's Cup - EAORA	1st in Class
Thames Estuary Shield - EAORA	1st in Class
Levington Classics - SYH	3rd in Class, 4th Overall
East Coast Race - RORC/EAORA	1st in Class, 4th Overall
Sunk Race - EAORA/WMYC	1st in Class.
Graham Wallis Trophy - EAORA	3rd in Class
Cannon Ball Trophy - EAORA	2nd in Class
Walker Challenge Cup - EAORA	1st Overall
Offshore Regatta - EAORA	2nd in Class, 3rd Overall
Rolex Fastnet Race - RORC	Finished - Box Ticked !
Houghton Cup - EAORA	Retired
Amazon Cup - EAORA	2nd in Class
Buckley Goblets - EAORA/WMYC	1st in Class, 2nd Overall
EAORA Season Championship	1st in Class, 3rd Overall

Tramp K5454 - 40 years of racing

By Steve Johnson



The extended Tramp family celebrate

In 1978 three newly-commissioned racing boats held a prodigious launching party, rafted up opposite the WMYC. It was the heyday of IOR offshore racing, and here was £80,000 of commitment in the shape of three Hustler 32's - John Harrison's *Gunsmoke*, Ron Wiggle's *Voodoo* and Frank Reed's *Tramp*. The former two boats were preparing for the Half-Ton world championships in Poole and *Tramp* for racing on the east coast.

The Hustler 32 was the latest in the line of 'Hustlers' marketed and commissioned by John Harrison, one of WMYC's top racing yachtsman and owner of Island Boat Sales. Designed by up-and-coming designer Stephen Jones and built by Verivale to rate IOR 21.7 ft, the then current rating for the Half Ton class. There were masthead and fractional rig versions, the first of the latter was second overall in the 1978 Half-Ton world championships.

LOA 32.3ft, LWL 25ft, Beam 11.25ft, Draft 5.83ft, Disp 3039kg, Bal 1338kg, SA 38.5m.

I watched *Tramp* racing in the EAORA Thames Estuary race in 1978, when she won her class and was 2nd overall, beating John Harrison's *Gunsmoke* crew of Dougie Seaden, Hector Heathcote, Stevie Johnson and Paul Harrison into 3rd. *Tramp* obviously had pace.

Hector and I did a few races on *Tramp* at the end of that season, including a race on the Thames as her base was then Thurrock yacht club. We agreed with Frank and Carole 'Come on little boat!' Britton to sign up for the 1979 season as *Tramp*'s new home to be the WMYC.

1979 was *Tramp*'s year, winning EAORA overall. With top Kiwi sailor Haven Collins aboard she was difficult to beat in anything over 12 kts of breeze. The series, however, went to the wire as there were some excellent boats competing in the 60-strong fleet. *Tramp* needed a good result in the prestigious Buckley Goblets – the last race of the series. With a run across the North sea in a good breeze

Reedy passed over the helm and with the Big Boy trimmed to leeward we were hitting 14kts down the waves. Gybing in the dark around the Binnenstroom bank buoy, *Tramp* was soon under the welcoming lights of the North Sea Yacht Club. Great joy - our rivals weren't in! Time for a large Tramp party! The Goblets were presented to Frank the next morning and fortunately survived the continuing Jupiter and Pastis-fuelled celebrations.

Tramp now had her reputation and attracted top crew, and accordingly Frank and Carole planned new challenges – with RORC races now on the agenda. On the North Sea Race she had a night altercation with a coaster (which was subsequently held liable) when crew Graham Williams was thrown overboard. In a life threatening situation he was recovered by Frank and the rest of the crew. *Tramp* was a lucky ship.

She headed to the south coast for Cowes Week, with a crew old and new, continuing to perform well at the home of English yachting EAORA week racing to France, Belgium and the Netherlands for a number of years introduced new faces to *Tramp*, including Jamie Wheatley, Andy Radley and Bernie Catchpool. A 60-strong fleet gathered in Zierikzee for racing on the Oosterschelde. After a horrible light-aired run to Ramsgate, the next day's heavy No 1 beat from Ramsgate to Oostende saw us back on the podium. The rest of the weeks racing was a challenge.

Tramp's crews have always loved a party (I'm sure it was part of the selection process), so when Frank and Carole sensibly booked into a hotel, the crew went on the town with a thirsty fleet! A bar with a large reel-to-reel tape deck – no wifi in those days – great music and too much Genever



Reedy's last race - and another win! With Steve on the helm

soon had everybody in a muddle and dancing on the tables. *Tramp* didn't race the next day.

In 1999 to mark the centenary of our club, a RORC race from Tower Bridge via the Kentish Nock and Longsand Head was planned. Frank was OOD and *Tramp* was brought out of offshore retirement - Carole wasn't going to miss this! Also competing were Richard Matthew's 12-metre *Crusader* and Piet Vroon's *Tonnerre of Breskins*. The start in the middle of the city was spectacular. *Tramp* had some of her old friends aboard - Carole, Dougie, Steve and Debs, Martin Shaw and Graham Bloomfield.

After an interesting beat out of the Thames, and a timed motor through the Thames Barrier, *Tramp* was off Southend as dusk approached. Dougie

Seaden made the calls and applied himself to some tactical navigation. Night racing is always challenging, trying to identify the main competitors among the green, red and white disappearing navigation lights and the concern of commercial traffic. For many, the first light of day brings either cold disappointment or that warming glow of competitive happiness. As we approached the Longsand Head we were definitely in that latter category! At the prize-giving, hosted by Peter and Liz Clements, *Tramp's* crew awaited the result - surely a class win? Then happy shock, 1st overall!

That was the good ship's last offshore race. However she continued to perform well in local racing and has been a regular competitor in the Friday night series, winning overall in 2018 with Dougie Seaden driving.

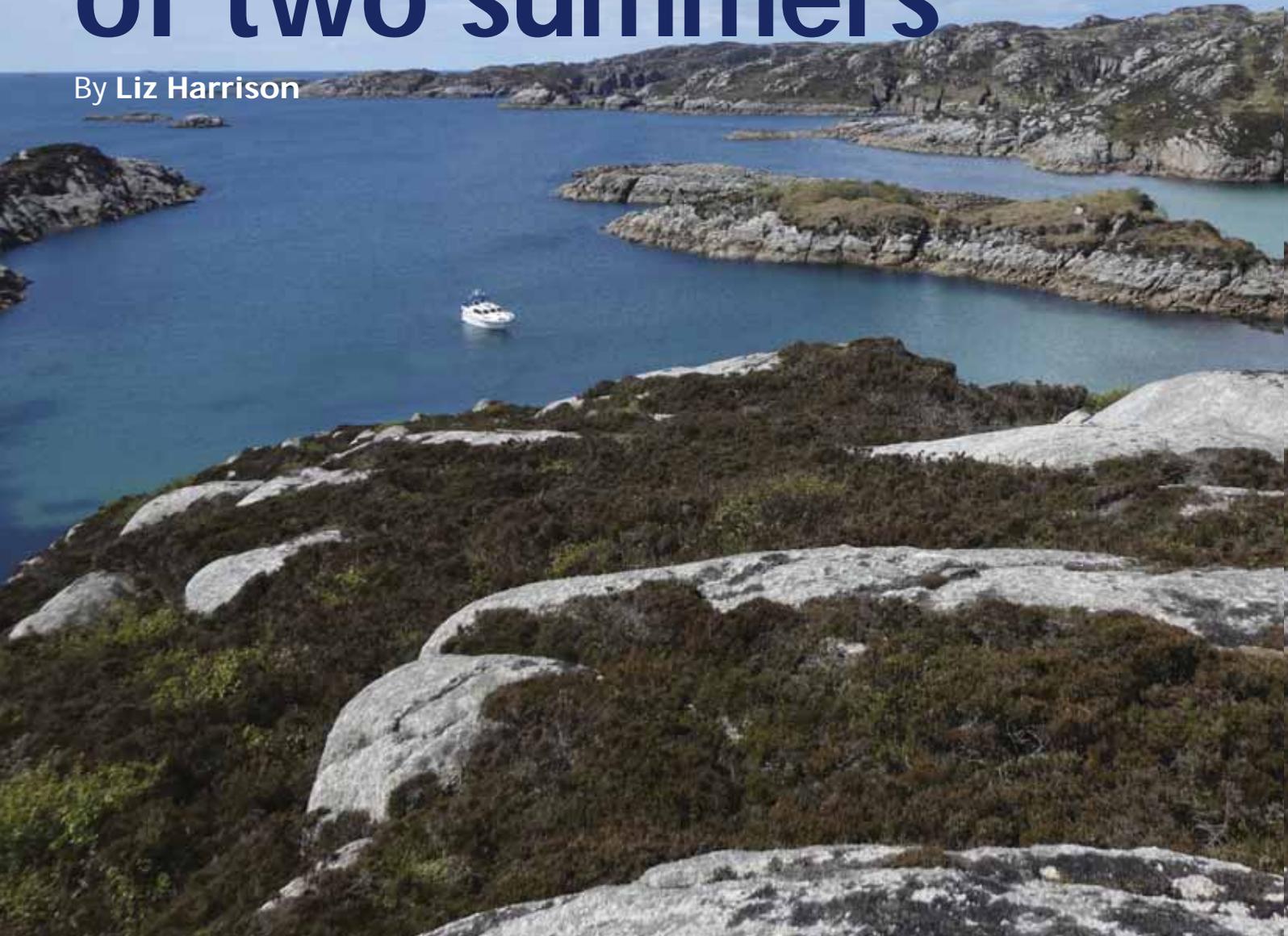
Frank's last race on board was the inaugural Ancient Mariners race in 2016. A popular win and a very happy Reedy,

Frank always updated the sail wardrobe, keeping her competitive even when he and Carol could no longer get onboard. So, 'Team Reedy' raced on - taking part in the last two Mersea Weeks with a crew of old chums, a few of whom had been there at the start 40 years ago. Yes, the old IOR Half-Tonner could still be 1st round the weather mark and back on the podium.

So, thank you to Frank and Carole, and of course to *Tramp* - a boat with a very large family.

The Hebrides - a tale of two summers

By Liz Harrison



Not another boat in sight. Ardalanish on the Ross of Mull

In 1984 Paul and I first sailed through Scotland's Western Isles, part of the support team for the first person to windsurf around mainland Britain. As we sailed up the Sound of Jura, through Loch Alsh and north past Skye we vowed we'd be back to cruise these beautiful waters.

It took us 34 years but now we're addicted to this cruising ground, which reminds us so much of New Zealand and has anchorages matching the best of the Caribbean and French Polynesia.

We decided to take our Haines 340 Offshore motorboat which was

berthed in St Katherine's Dock – our London flat. We were under no illusion that the weather might be a little inclement at times and *Merganser* has good central heating, panoramic views from the saloon and a covered driving position in the cockpit. She's got a great galley, two double berths and two heads – perfect for inviting friends along too. Oh, and a great platform for Jester, our loyal 'boat dog' and enthusiastic hill climber.

After a couple of 'practice' trips up the Thames we took *Merganser* to Tollesbury for a once over, and then sent her north - on the back of a low

loader! In mid-May last year, we literally chased her up the A1, across to Penrith and on to Glasgow and Ardrossan. It cost about the same as if we'd motored north from Mersea, it only took 24 hours, and no one was sea-sick!

The weather was awful as we shopped and stowed but the day we set off dawned clear and bright, the sea was mill pond calm, and the views of Arran were stunning. Little did we know that this marked the start of what was to be a record-breaking summer with long hot days, clear skies and balmy evenings.



Preparing Merganser for her trip north on the back of a low-loader.

the south to the Butt of Lewis in the north. Our plan was to start at Barra, day trip to the islands to the south and then head north as the weather allowed.

So, as a sea fog cleared and with Steve and Debs (complete with kayaks) on board, we set off from CastleBay, to explore Mingulay, Pabbay and Sandray.

It was our first taste of the majesty of the islands, the varied bird and sea life, and the reminders of the hardship suffered by past residents. Back in the Castlebay Hotel's public bar we had the best *craik* ever, when one of the boys picked up his piano accordion to celebrate with the local fishermen as their weeks' catch headed off in a lorry bound for Portugal or Spain.



Outer Hebrides route 2018.

Mooring in Lochranza on the NW corner of Arran, we joined Mersea mates Margie Sansom, Howard and Angela Payne and Steve and Debs Johnson for what's become an annual walking holiday on Arran. We then waved goodbye to Arran, bound for the Outer Hebrides. We motored through the Crinan Canal (two long, slow days), stopping overnight on the Ross of Mull, and cycled partway round Coll; circled a basking shark and cruised past a minke whale. Just a taste of what was to come.

The Outer Hebrides or the 'Long Isle' stretches 130 miles from Barra Head in

We parted with the Johnskis and headed north to find the first of many magical anchorages, this one between Gighay and Hellinsay. Crossing a sand bar we turned into a perfect pool towered over by the hills of the two islands, where a pair of Golden Eagles watched us intently. We could have watched them all day.

The Clyde Cruising Club's 'Sailing Directions and Anchorages' is the bible for this part of the world and Hamish Haswell-Smith's 'The Scottish Islands' is an essential guide to both the history and current day attractions of the islands. There are also the Antares Charts which supplement official charts to guide more adventurous sailors. These charts were highly recommended, but we couldn't download them on the limited wifi at community centres and cafes. Something to add to the winter jobs list.



Caolas An Scarp, Harris

If we'd taken the CCC's guide as gospel, we would never have found half the anchorages that we wriggled and edged into. For example, Loch Eynort on South Uist. The entrance is difficult enough to spot, a small cleft in the cliff face. Once past the central submerged rock in a narrow, rock-strewn passage, it's a hairpin bend into the loch proper where seals play noisily in the kelp, otters fish and birds of prey circle overhead. We took the dinghy to the top of the loch with the bicycles – the perfect way to explore the wild west coast, where beaches stretch between burial grounds and the wildflowers in the machair were exploding with colour.

Paddle-boarding back to the boat from an evening dog walk, we spotted a pair of kayakers paddling up the loch. It was Steve and Debs! They'd rough-camped at the entrance, where they'd been kept awake by the seals, and were bubbling over with excitement at having come face to face with an otter.

By now, it was well into June and the weather was becoming unsettled. The pontoons in Loch Maddy provided shelter from Storm Hector – a 'wee

blow' with gusts of over 90mph.

At the northern end of Harris we loved Tarbert and nearby Scalpay, not least because of the harbourmaster Fred Taylor. Once the Laird of Scalpay (and still the owner of smaller islands in East Loch Tarbert), Fred knows everything. He introduced us to a woman who did our laundry. She introduced us to her brothers who were fishermen and so we got fresh lobster for dinner. Being friendly and interested will get you a long way in these islands.

So too will patience. Our one wish was to get to the west coast of Harris and Lewis, which meant waiting for the wind to back. Eventually we got our weather window and headed round the Toe of Harris and north to the SW corner of Lewis. This was the highlight of the summer of 2018.

Navigating through the Caolas An (Sound of) Scarp we came across a vast, shallow, sandy bar. We watched the anchor drop all the way to the sandy bottom through clear, azure water. On our left was Scarp, whose last permanent residents left in the 1971. To the right was a long, white

shell-sand beach with sheep grazing in the dunes and meadows stretching beyond the machair into towering hills.

Beyond the bar (there is a navigable passage) is Braigh Mor, a bay where a cluster of islands break up the ever-present westerly swell and fingers of water reach into the hills. We climbed to the top of Scarp for spectacular views of the bay and the hills of Harris and Lewis; we explored ruins and walked lazy beds, and watched the sea fog rolling in as a bank of impenetrable white. We could have stayed a month!

A little south and east of Scarp is Taransay, where a single boulder balances atop every peak as if put there as part of a game. From there are great views of the vast sandy estuaries of Scarista and Luskentyre on Harris. We walked back to Luskentyre a few days later, following the Coffin Road from the east coast where the land is too hard to bury the dead.

We first explored Loch Seaforth, just north of Scalpay, in rain and wind with friends Hubert and Elaine Seifert. Despite the inclement weather, the day

became one of the most memorable after we hailed a pot boat and bought a tray of wriggling Scalpay prawns (langoustine to you and me). In the shelter of a small island we cooked and ate the fresh prawns until we could eat no more.

A couple of weeks later, we were once again motoring up Loch Seaforth, finding shelter in Loch Mharaig. From here we explored, walking the spectacular Postman's Route, climbing hills and trekking up glens. I couldn't resist helping the local crofters shear their sheep and Paul spent hours upside down painting a clinker built dinghy, not unlike a winkle brig. The dinghy belonged to a former submariner and Port of London harbourmaster, who had retired to the Outer Hebrides. Sitting on the edge of the loch we could see why!

Four miles off Lewis are the Shiant Isles, one of Europe's most important breeding colonies for seabirds. Around 10 per cent of UK puffins and seven per cent of razorbills breed here every year, with Manx shearwaters and storm petrels beginning to move in. We anchored in the inky calm and photographed the puffins skipping across the surface, the guillemots swimming in the clear water and the gulls squabbling noisily for the best spots on the guano covered cliffs. Climbing to the cliff top, we sat among puffins watching the adults fly in with mouthfuls of sand eels and warily dive into their burrows to feed their hidden young. Magical.



Razorbill.



Paul bottling his own single malt whisky at the Bruichladdich distillery on Islay.

We were sad to leave the Outer Hebrides, but when a weather window appeared we crossed the Minch to loch hop down the mainland coast. We left *Merganser* with Creran Marine on Loch Creran, just north of Oban.

We returned here on the Thursday before Easter this year, wondering if the weather could possibly be as good as the previous summer and keen to see if we could find anchorages as wild, remote and beautiful as those of the Outer Hebrides.

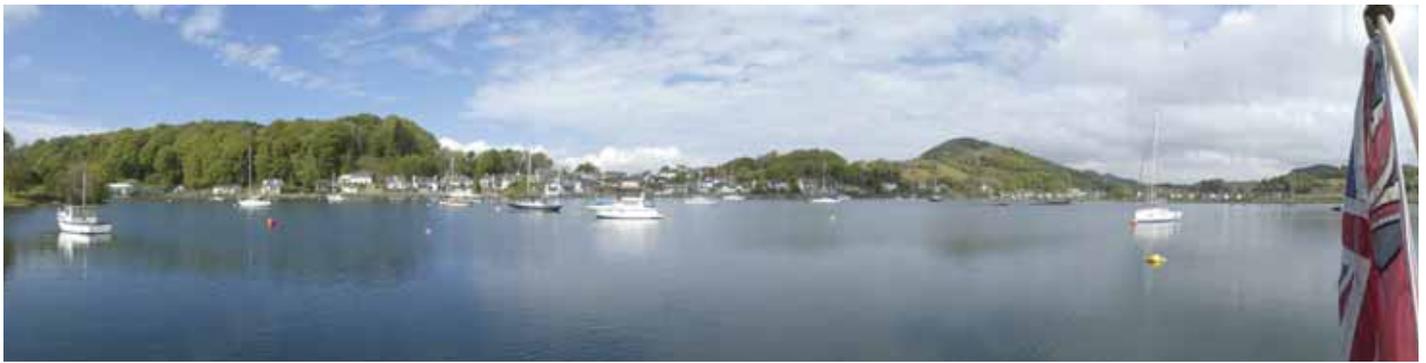
The sea was calm and the wind light as we motored from Oban down Seil Sound, across the Sound of Jura and through the notorious Gulf of Corryvreckan. We passed the spectacular raised stone beaches down

the west coast of Jura and navigated our way into the four-mile long Loch Tarbert, which nearly cuts Jura in half. We climbed to the most spectacular of the raised beaches, narrowly missing a black adder basking in the sun.

From the inner loch there's a narrow passage leading through to the Top Pool. The CCC guide describes it as 'a more serious undertaking which requires suitable conditions and careful navigation'. Words like this are a red rag to a bull as far as 'Harrison Paul' is concerned and so we 'carefully navigated' our way through, following the pairs of pillars, leading us between and around the rocks.

Off the southern end of Jura is Islay, famous for its nine whisky distilleries – we visited two. We hunkered down in Port Askaig where there's only room for four boats and a handful of day boats; where you go in forwards and come out backwards! From Islay we motored to Gigha and Gighalum, a small island regularly visited by friends on Mersea and home to the wonderful Boathouse restaurant - one of a string of first-class restaurants.

Stretching inland from the Sound of Jura is a loch not to be missed – Loch Sween. A ruined castle watches over the entrance and the ancient oak woodland of Knapdale runs down to the water's edge. The pretty anchorage at Tayvellich is well worth a visit and the Faery Isles are a must. From here you can walk up to Loch



Tayvallich, Loch Sween.

Coille-Bharr where beavers have been reintroduced.

After fuelling up at Ardfern in Loch Craignish, we motored back up the Sound of Jura and through the fast-moving waters and whirlpools of the Sound of Luing, crossing to the Ross of Mull.

Mull is the second-largest island in the Inner Hebrides (after Skye) with most of the population living in Tobermory, well known for its colourful houses. At the heart of the island is Ben More, which at 3169 feet, is the only 'Munroe' in the Islands. Needless to say, Paul skipped up the mountain while Jester and I walked up Glenmore, a long open glen at its base. Off the end of Mull is Iona, where St Columba established a monastery in 563, bringing Christianity to the islands. We were lucky enough to be able to anchor off, but if the weather doesn't play ball you can catch the ferry from Mull along with the 130,000 others who visit Iona each year.

Mull is often called Eagle Island, referring to the successful re-introduction of white-tailed eagles in the 1980s. At the foot of Ben More we came across a cluster of people with tripods and long lenses, all pointing across Loch na Keal to a wooded slope beyond. There a pair of white-tailed sea eagles were nesting.

To the west of Mull are a spattering of smaller islands, most worth a visit. On Coll, the hotel has undergone a major refurb and, as well as offering showers to sailors, serves fabulous food. There's Lunga, one of the Treshnish Islands, where tourists pour off tripper boats to see puffins nesting on top of the cliffs, and Staffa with its tall six-sided vertical columns of basalt rock

giving way to Fingal's Cave - made famous by Mendelssohn and his Hebrides Overture.

North of Mull are the 'small isles' of Rhum, Muck and Eigg. Time was running out at this point, so we had to



Inner Hebrides route 2019.

choose just one anchorage to visit and settled on a bay off the northern end of Muck. This is a gem of an island, with surprises around every corner. The only road is 1.5 miles long, running from Port Mor where the café is another gastronomic delight, to Gallanach Farm in the north. We met the 'laird' of the island, Lawrence MacEwen whose wife sold us home grown lamb. One son helps on the farm, another runs a commercial shoot, and the daughter runs a very smart shooting lodge where you can book in for dinner.

It's hard to summarise five months in the Hebrides and this is just a flavour of what's on offer. *Merganser* is tucked up for the winter in the marina at Ardfern. It never freezes up there and rarely snows so we're happy to leave her in the water albeit with a heater and dehumidifier.

Most importantly she's ready to go should the opportunity arise for a long weekend afloat in the beautiful Hebrides.



Fingal's Cave on Staffa.

Loads a boats

By Jay Stapley

My first boat was not the most opulent of craft: it was a Kingfisher 20+, a bluff-bowed chunk of glass fibre drawn by an aircraft designer in Poole. What he fitted into that small hull was amazing. But if she was driving into any kind of a sea, she would stagger to a halt before gathering herself together and regaining forward way. In certain conditions she simply never got going again and the only option was to bear away to meet the waves at an angle, or not go sailing at all.

We kept her initially in Poole where we bought her, but moved to Chichester harbour when Poole turned into L.A.. Then on to Faversham, where the tide window was so narrow that I hardly sailed her for two or three years, before finally bringing her across the various intervening estuaries to Mersea. After a couple of years I bought another lump of fibre-glass, a little better designed but still the butt of much ribaldry in the yacht club bar any time I mentioned that I might be considering the possibility of going racing in her. I sold the Kingfisher a year later and a year after that we moved to Mersea.

It took a while for the realisation to sink in that on Mersea, you don't have 'a boat' you have 'boats'. The notion that a cruiser and a tender are sufficient is soon exposed as hopelessly naive. Even buying a tender, after years of having a marina berth, felt like the first step on a slippery slope. My first

tender was a pram dinghy with such low freeboard that I would get disapproving shakes of the head (and on a still day, audible tutting) from more expert boat people if had so much as a single kit bag in the prow. I graduated to a more conventional tender, which now languishes in a corner of the garden because I use the yacht club launch whenever possible. I'm sure it will come in handy again when they throw me out of the club for discussing religion and politics in the bar.

Having spent a season using my dinghy to fish in the creeks, the onset of a permanent knee pain made me realise that I needed what's known as a 'chugger': a powered boat which is big enough to stretch my legs out in but small enough to get up to the top of Salcott. I even take it out into the river in a calm day, despite comments made by some friends which feature the words 'tippy', 'death', and 'trap'. This same chugger is also invaluable on town regatta day: the water sports are best appreciated from a small boat moored 'on the line', not least for the levels sociability (more accurately spelled 'd-r-i-n-k-i-n-g') with other boats there. The chugger is also useful for picnic trips to Ray Island and has earned its keep and place in the drive. Getting it in and out of the drive, however, is another matter entirely.

So how many more boats do I need? At least two: the first of these being a small sailing boat that can be simply pushed into the water in a matter of

minutes, rather than the hour it takes to get the cruiser fully active. I am torn between a duck punt and a single-sail boat like an Opie. I suspect I'm too big for the Opie, so the punt might be a good option. Owning a punt means I can also subject myself to the humiliation certain to be handed out when I race against those who have been sailing punts since before they were even born. I know I'll never compete with the locals who make the Town Regatta such a lively event. But at least if I own a punt I can identify in some small way with the experts.

Finally: a kayak or canoe is a must-have. For sheer directness of contact with the water, such a craft is hard to beat. On a recent trip to Canada I went white-water rafting and was captivated by the guy who followed the rafts in a single-seat kayak, mopping up the casualties. He seemed so a part of the water, in it rather than on it, acting with complete freedom and shooting the steepest of rapids with ease. OK, a mountain river in Canada can't really be compared with the Strood channel in terms of excitement and challenging conditions, but at my age that's probably as well. The only question is whether a canoe or kayak would be better. You can get more of a picnic basket (in my world, that's code for a cooler bag of beer) in a canoe but it doesn't feel as 'in' the water and can be tippy too.

So: cruiser, tender, chugger, small sailing dinghy, kayak/canoe... that's five boats so far. Any more suggestions?

West Mersea Lifeboat

By **Martin Wade**, Lifeboat Operations Manager

The year 2019 has been a fairly normal one in terms of the number of rescues we have done. The count is 48 as I write this in November and as we are over the busy summer season we should not have too many more before the year's end.

I have included some fund-raising events below, and we are always amazed at the endeavours some people do to raise funds for the RNLI. At this moment in November a lady from Rowhedge is trekking to Everest Base Camp with an RNLI flag in her backpack to raise enough money to kit-out a West Mersea crew member. Over the summer a man from Tollesbury windsurfed around three islands, raising funds for the RNLI and giving donations to the three island lifeboats - which were Mersea, Sheppey and Hayling.

An event that has been running for many years is the Maldon Little Ship Club's RNLI Rowing Race, held around New Year at Maldon. As well as the various rowing boats, kayaks and gigs taking part, a group of ladies from Heybridge Basin called the 'Basin Oars' always take part in their four oared boat in fancy dress, as well as raising money throughout the year for the RNLI. Our lifeboat always visits this event on an exercise and invites the ladies aboard for the customary photo.



The 'Basin Oars' on-board *Just George*

Our enthusiastic Fund Raising Guild runs many events throughout the year and one very popular event is a Shanty Night held in Mersea Museum, with the 'Motley



The 'Motley Crew' performing in the Museum

Crew' from Brightlingsea performing. This group of singers only raise funds for the RNLI and so are very pleased to come and perform for a Lifeboat Guild.

Every three years our class of lifeboat, which is an Atlantic 85, goes back to its maker for a re-fit and an update for its equipment to the latest specifications. All of the inshore lifeboats, which are the B Class Atlantic 85, the 16ft D Class and the Arancia - which is housed on the Severn - the Tamar offshore boats and those used by Lifeguards, are built and re-fitted at the RNLI Inshore Lifeboat facility in East Cowes. *Just George* went back there in January and returned in April. During this time we had the *Peterborough Beer Festival III* from the relief fleet as a replacement.



Just George returns from her re-fit

In June we had a call to a yacht aground on the East Mersea Flats, on a falling tide. When we arrived there was

only just enough water for the lifeboat to get alongside. Four people were then taken off and landed at Brightlingsea, where the yacht had come from. We learnt that the family of three on board had won a raffle for a day's sailing on this yacht, with not the ending they expected, although the young lad on board was very excited to have a trip on the lifeboat. The yacht was left anchored and the lifeboat returned with the skipper later that night near high tide. The skipper was then able to motor back to Brightlingsea.



Stranded yacht on East Mersea Flats

A singlehanded yachtsman was entering the Blackwater when he somehow managed to get his cruising chute jammed under a mainsail car near the mast head, with the result that neither sail could be lowered. He sensibly called the Coastguard for assistance and *Just George* went to offer help. Fortunately Simon Clarke and Daniel 'Bart' Hill from Peter Clarke's Boatyard were on board. Bart quickly offered to go up in the bosun's chair armed with a knife and the helmet camera. He soon had the chute cut free so that the mainsail could be lowered, but it took five turns of the yacht to unwrap the chute from the forestay.

Last year six kayakers from Coopers Beach caravan site set off to circumnavigate Mersea and raise funds for the



Yacht Meander with main and cruising chute jammed aloft



The chute being cut free

lifeboat by being sponsored. This year they did it again, but invited other kayakers to join in. A total of 34 turned up for the event and had an enjoyable paddle round the island, stopping at the Strood for lunch. They raised the impressive sum of £3806 for the RNLI.



34 Kayaks about to set off

Cadet Week 2019

Dom Barnes reflects on his first year as Chair



Cadet Week is a week of sailing and social events for the young sailors of West Mersea Yacht Club and the Dabchicks Sailing Club, which has been running since 1935. As such, it is one of the UK's longest running and largest club cadet sailing events in the UK. This is something we hope both clubs are very proud of.

In February this year I was caught in a moment of weakness and, with my arm firmly twisted behind my back, agreed to step in and take over the Chair of Cadet Week. I have loved every second of it and have offered to do it again in 2020.

It's either madness or brilliance, is how I describe Cadet Week. The piles of sailing gear all over the house, garden and car and the warm feeling inside that is impossible to explain to the land lubbers in your life, is proof of this!

Like many of us, I have been involved in cadet sailing for a long time, since my daughter was eight - she turned 23 this year. In that time I have been a fleet coach for the highly popular Sunset Series at the Dabchicks, the Chief Instructor for all fleets and then was asked to join the Cadet Week Committee where I became the first Inside Fleet Leader.

This year, our theme was Pirates and everyone certainly got into the spirit: while some decorated their boats with Jolly Rogers, others chose to wear full pirate costumes.

Peter Clements looked very dashing on dress up day on board Serendipity, which he provided as Committee boat for the week. Greg Dunn brilliantly set the tone singing pirate songs and playing his accordion at both briefings on the Sunday evening and before the racing kicked off on Monday.

Across the week, a total of 160 sailors took part, with a staggering 144 boats out on the water each day.

Chris Burr is the current Optimist Fleet leader, who has the unenviable job of coordinating everything for our amazing 91 young Optimist sailors.

'Mersea Cadet Week really brings everyone together, both the cadets and the parents,' says Chris. 'The cadets make great friendships that will last them a lifetime. The parents, who all volunteer, work hard to make it such a success and they really do enjoy the week as much as the children. There's a very real sense of achievement and fun for everyone.'

But it wasn't all about the sailing: in the evenings, the cadets took part in many different social activities such as 'It's a Knockout' at Mersea Outdoors, roller-skating at Rollerworld, and a



pirate themed fancy-dress party at the Dabchicks Sailing Club - complete with a visit from Captain Jack Sparrow! On Friday, the traditional water fight and 'Walk Past' (where Optimist sailors decorate their boats) took place, followed by the much-anticipated Parents' Race, where relatives compete in the small Optimist dinghies. Due to high winds on the Tuesday, a 75-foot long water slide was organised and on Wednesday the cadets built rafts to escape the Mersea shores! Fortunately they all decided to come back and Lucy Newman's team, 'The Blackwater Bandits', were declared victorious. Her team also went on to win the overall Team Trophy which combines results from both sailing and social/non-competitive events.

Each year there is a final race on Friday afternoon for the winners of Optimist Gold, Slow, Laser 4.7 and Fast Handicaps for the prestigious Viking

Trophy. Again, this was first awarded in 1935. There are four short races in Sonata yachts kindly loaned by their owners. This year it was won by Tim Crossley and Harry Chatterton, who sailed a brilliant series of races throughout the week.

At the end of it all, the cadets celebrated their hard work at the prize giving and after-party, hosted by West Mersea Yacht Club. A big winner of the night was Charlotte Allen, who not only came first in her fleet, but was also awarded the new Cadet Week Committee Trophy, this year awarded for Sportsmanship, due to her positive and helpful attitude towards others throughout the week.

At the prize giving I congratulated all those who won trophies. But added: 'if you started a race and didn't give up, you've already a winner.'

'Mersea Cadet Week is proof that not all treasure is Silver and Gold,' I said. 'The true treasure is friendship. Sailing, and particularly sailing here, creates life-long and deep friendships'.

A huge thanks must go to the hard working, Cadet Week Committee for not only organising a fantastic week for the Cadets, but in recognition that it takes a whole year to plan and put the week together.

Special thanks go to Micro-Scooter, The Royal Hospital School, Mersea Island Watersports and West Mersea Dental Practice for sponsoring the event as well as to all of the parents who volunteered throughout the week.

Full results from the week can be found at www.cadetweek.co.uk. For more information, contact the Cadet Week Committee at committee@cadetweek.co.uk.



Pictures by Chrissie Westgate

2019 Inside Fleet Results

Trophies

Tomato – Kyer Jowers (most number of 1sts)
 Diamond Seamanship – Henry Crisp
 Diamond Trophy – Kyer Jowers
 Emerald Trophy – Sam Cook
 Emerald Seamanship – Izzy Kelly
 Most improved sailor – George Burr
 Ruby Trophy – Issy Bartlett
 Ruby Seamanship – Olivia Goodwin
 First Bronze Sailor in Ruby Fleet – Charlotte Granger
 First non-traveller – Dom Gozzett
 First Gold – Charlotte Allen
 Gold Seamanship – Matilda Milgate
 Endeavour – William Jones

Diamond - Racing

1st Kyer Jowers
 2nd Thomas Blackmore
 3rd Evan Ward

Diamond - Seamanship

1st Henry Crisp
 2nd Monia Bellomo
 3rd Will Grout

Emerald - Racing

1st Sam Cook
 2nd George Burr
 3rd Alexander Tyler
Emerald - Seamanship
 1st Izzy Kelly
 2nd Zara Yuzen
 3rd James Richardson

Ruby - Racing

1st Izzy Bartlett
 2nd Charlotte Granger
 3rd Sonny Simpson



2019 Outside Fleet Results

Ruby - Seamanship

- 1st Olivia Goodwin
- 2nd Seb Lingard
- 3rd Sonny Simpson

Gold - Racing

- 1st Charlotte Allen
- 2nd Dominic Gozzett
- 3rd James Blackmore

Gold - Seamanship

- 1st Matilda Milgate
- 2nd Dominique Granger
- 3rd = Matthew Sanderson & Ruby Talbot

Slow fleet (overall)

Charlie Jacobs

1st RS Feva

Lucy Aird-Brown / Amy Struth

1st Topper

Mary Richardson

Medium fleet/Laser 4.7

Gabby Clifton

Fast fleet

1st Double Hander

Tim Crossley and Harry Chatterton

1st Single Hander

James Brosnan-Wren

Hannah Stodel (for endeavour)

Lucy Aird-Brown and Lucy Struth

Sportsmanship

Laura Ferneyhough

Seamanship

Johnny Barnes/Cameron

Viking Trophy

Tim Crossley and Harry Chatterton

Cadet Week Committee Trophy

Charlotte Allen

The Life and Times of

By Greg Dunn



Axel taking up residence

As Richard Hayden revealed publicly when anointing me as his successor as chairman of Mersea Week, I come from Tollesbury. Although it didn't feel it at the time, I had an idyllic childhood messing about in boats. But it all ended when I swallowed the anchor and came ashore for adult life. Wherever my career took me, I always kept a dinghy in Tollesbury Creek, and I was never away for more than a summer month, as I always had the legendary family seat of Great Downs to return to.

I have always felt life is like a pinball machine; one travels in a seemingly endless direction, and suddenly a flipper bounces one off on a totally different trajectory. One of the biggest of these seismic shifts was the death of my father, Gerald Dunn, in 2002, and the realisation that the family would have to sell Great Downs to fund care for our sainted mother. I therefore needed my own roost in Tollesbury,

and the most economical way of achieving it was sifting through eBay (then in its infancy) to find a reasonably priced boat with a lid on.

My search took me to Faversham on an unseasonably cold day in November 2002, to look at a 24-foot steel Dutch WIBO 2 class sloop - complete with everything bar engine and sails. Most of the worst decisions of my life were taken in drink, and it's a modern phenomenon to awake to an inbox full of successful bid emails one has no recollection of placing. This particular email informed me I was the proud owner of *Stiletto* for the amazingly modest price of £205!

David and Mickey Weller were engaged to tow my new holiday home from Faversham to Tollesbury with their trawler, on what turned out to be the coldest Saturday in February 2003, with a wind chill factor that was off the scale. Not wanting to get neaped in Faversham Creek, our departure was

so swift I didn't get the chance to transfer my thermos and food to *Stiletto* (which I had renamed *Trinovante* and invoked the traditional bad luck in so doing), so off we tore into a slate grey Thames Estuary.

The first casualties were the rather beautiful mahogany gunwales that I hadn't realised were only attached with plastic cable ties. I helplessly watched them disappear astern, my pleading look to David Weller being answered by a slow shake of the head so wild were the conditions. The tow rope parted twice, and re-attaching it involved me dancing about on the pitching foredeck with nowt to hang on to. By the time we reached Shingle Head, I was in the advanced stages of hypothermia. But Tollesbury was safely made, and *Trinovante* was lifted out and put on hardstanding in Mouse Green's yard.

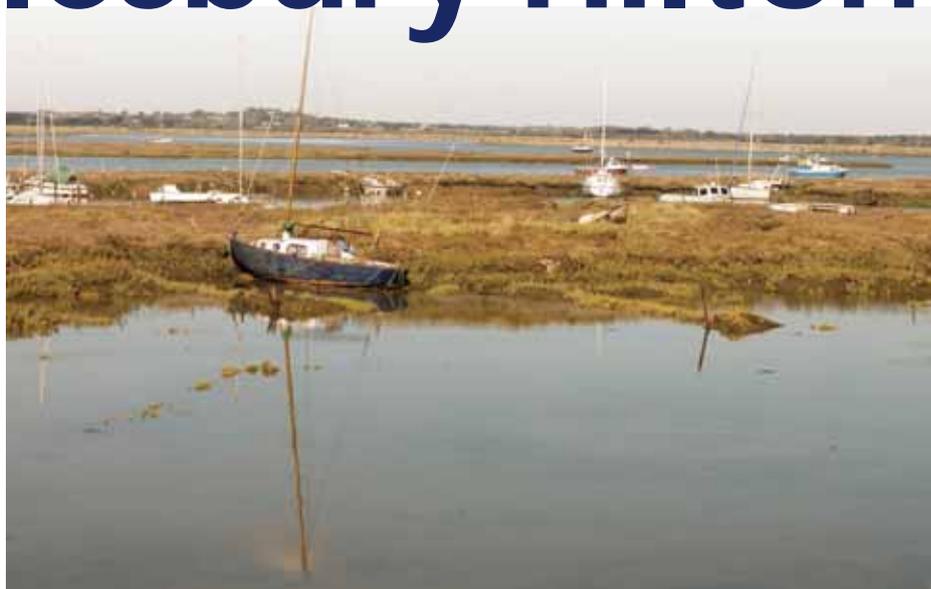
And that was the start of my new social life in Tollesbury, as *Trinovante*

the 'Tollesbury Hilton'

became the waterside hub for dropping in for tea, coffee, beer, whisky and wine, and more than once hosted candlelit dinner parties for four. She became known as the 'Tollesbury Hilton', and it was in her kitchen that I honed my skills as a microwave food technician.

It was then I made the acquaintance of a neighbour in the yard who has become a firm friend. Axel Pedersen isn't a man one meets every day. He is a polymath hailing from South Africa, and has been building a junk to his own design in Mouse's yard for so long that he can't remember when he started. At the time I met him, he and his extensive library were being evicted from the roof space of one of the erroneously named Tollesbury 'Sail Lofts' – understandably, owing to the incompatibility of paraffin stoves and wooden structures. So Axel moved into the cold, dank Hilton for a cruelly cold winter, until a place came up in sheltered housing close to the Rec, known as 'God's Waiting Room'.

As Axel had de facto taken over the Hilton, he decided to launch her and put her in a mud berth out on Atkinson's saltings. Some time before that, when we were both a bit hard up, we flogged the lead out of the



Trinovante on the saltings

hollow keel, making some £500. But this made for a wild yawing voyage down Tollesbury Creek. Axel moved a large section of his library aboard, which fortunately survived and didn't turn to cheese before it was rehoused in his new home. The Hilton subsequently served as overflow guest accommodation for Axel's visiting family.

It was in September this year when news reached me that the Hilton had sunk in her berth. She'd rusted through in front of the keel and had filled with an astonishing amount of mud, given the small size of the hole. Axel formulated a rescue plan, which

involved lashings of concrete around the keel:hull joint, and that worked a treat. On the top of a disappointingly low spring tide, it took all 30hp of my dory to wrench her out of her berth. Like a cork out of a bottle, she shot across the creek and planted herself firmly on the other side. What followed was a pantomime of gongoozling by the cream of the MFOB fleet, who were on their way up the creek for post-race power drinking in Tollesbury Sailing Club!

After a chronicle of minor disasters, we floated her onto *Black Diamond's* launching trolley on Woodup Hard in the middle of the night, and I carted her back to my yard in Rushmere Close, Mersea. Whilst hauling some devilishly heavy chain out of her, I put my back out, but struggled on to cart her to the dump on Colchester Hythe. She weighed in at 1.6 tonnes and netted me £90, which has been entirely spoken for by two subsequent trips to the osteopath to fix my back.

There are few places as depressing as a scrap yard on a rainy autumn day, but that was where I said goodbye to the Hilton. As the closing scene of Terminator 2 came into my head, when Arnie lowers himself into the molten vat to recycle himself, it seemed most appropriate to whisper 'Hasta la vista, baby'.



Hasta la vista baby



Mersea Week Photo

Competition Winner

'From Maria' By Cally Stubbs

Some Lovely Islands

By John Kent



Bornholm. Ianassa in Hammerhavn on a rainy day

Many years ago I read a book entitled 'Some Lovely Islands', written by Leslie Thomas. Mersea did not get a mention, but the book helped me start to understand the attraction of islands.

Having cruised the Baltic for the past three seasons in *Ianassa*, our Najad 380, we have passed many, many islands and visited quite a few. Some have been little more than a rock while others have been substantial, with their own towns and even cities. Most have had that 'island charm' that sailors are familiar with, but I thought I would share four of my 'stand out' Baltic islands.

Bornholm

Bornholm is a Danish Island, well known for its harbours, hospitality and holiday atmosphere. Located well to the east of the rest of Denmark, south of Sweden and north of Poland, it occupies an area of approximately 600 square km with a resident population of almost 40,000. Bornholm is a centre for dairy farming, arts and crafts, such as glass and pottery production, and tourism during the summer.

The island is also known as Solskinsøen (Sunshine Island) because of its weather and as Klippeøen (Rock Island) because of its geology, which is predominantly granite. The heat from the summer sun is stored in the rock

formations and the weather is quite warm until October. The island's topography consists of dramatic rock formations in the north, sloping down towards pine and deciduous forests, farmland in the middle and sandy beaches in the south.

Strategically located in the Baltic Sea, Bornholm has been fought over for centuries. Usually ruled by Denmark, but at times also by Sweden and Germany. Bornholm was surrendered by Denmark to Sweden in 1658 but after a local revolt was regained by Denmark in 1660. The ruin of Hammershus in the north is the largest medieval fortress in northern Europe and testament to Bornholm's strategic importance. The turbulent past means



the island has an especially large number of Danish 'round churches', which were built as both a defensive structures and places of worship.

During our several visits to Bornholm we have never managed to stay in any of the pretty and atmospheric harbours on the islands east coast. These harbours are small and in high summer crammed with visiting yachts. They are also exposed to strong easterlies and the first time we visited were all closed by storm gates for three days. So we did what all sensible cruising sailors do in such circumstances and hired a car to tour the island. This helped us find some of Bornholm's many charms.

The first delight was Fru Petersen's



Fru Petersen's cake buffet

café, near Osterlars, where we stopped at 'elevenes' time. The waitress explained we could have a coffee and cake or, for just a little more, we could have unlimited coffee and cakes from the cake buffet. Naturally we went for the buffet! The choice, variety and quality of cakes were stunning – there were even watermelon slices to refresh the palate. We eventually staggered out to the car and could not face sweet carbohydrates for several days! Other gastronomic delights of Bornholm include (in common with much of the Baltic) delicious smoked fish and the mini smoked sausages, or 'beer sticks' as they are colloquially known - as consumption encourages drinking too many beers!

The atmosphere of Bornholm attracts and encourages artists. On another windy day, while cycling through the countryside, a local lady showed us 'Slau's Stones', a collection of rocks that a local farmer, turned artist, had

used as his canvas to depict the history and legends of the island. The fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen and Norse Gods are among his subjects.

In addition to mooring in Ronne, Bornholm's main city, we have also moored in Hammerhavn, a 'refuge' harbour on the north west tip of the island, useful shelter from those

One of Slau's Stones





Hammerhavn sunset

easterly winds. The harbour sits beneath the medieval castle of Hammershus and we have been one of the only boats there on a rainy day and also rafted in the high season, enjoying an evening with Swedish neighbouring boats. Ashore, a larch-clad kiosk serves the best sandwiches on the island, and local beer – what more is needed! We have seen otters in the harbour and enjoyed some lovely walks, particularly up to the castle. Best of all though is the sunset, a spectacular sight in mid-summer.

So Bornholm really has it all – towns, villages, remote places, beautiful scenery and some lovely harbours.

Utklippan

From the largest of my four favourite Baltic islands to the smallest. Utklippan is the name of a lighthouse, built originally in 1789 on Södraskär (South skerry). There is also Norraskär (North skerry) and together with the outlying rocks this rocky complex now takes the lighthouse's name. Utklippan is located about 50nm due north of Bornholm and about four miles south of the island of Utlangan, which forms the south east corner of Sweden. It is an ideal stop when travelling between

southern Sweden and Stockholm, saving a three hour diversion in and out of Karlskrone, a large town and naval base with a good guest harbour.

Utklippan is more of a rock than an island. In addition to the decommissioned lighthouse, there are only a few disused buildings, previously accommodation for the lighthouse keepers. The small rectangular harbour is blasted out of the rock. There are two entrances, one facing west and the other east, so entry on the lee side is always possible. Mooring here is akin to mooring in a swimming pool. Facilities consist of a couple of composting toilets and one or two electricity points. Self-sufficiency is essential.

The original 1789 light was a basket light, the current tower was built in 1870 and it replaced an earlier tower built in 1840. The light towers were built on top of an original fort. In 2007 it was decided that the lighthouse was no longer needed and the light was de-activated. It can still be visited, and from the top seals can be seen basking on the outlying rocks that have both claimed and protected many vessels over the years.

During our first visit to Utklippan I vowed never to return – what was I doing on this deserted rock? But Linda's enthusiasm rubbed off and I started to see the beauty of the seascapes, the wonderful flora and fauna and the fabulous sun-sets. We have met some charming cruising sailors there, enjoying conversations with Danes, Poles, Germans, Swedes and Dutch crews. It is a very cosmopolitan group that sits down to barbeques each evening and to watch the sun slip into the sea.

Timing is everything when visiting Utklippan, I would only want to be there in settled weather. If you want solitude, then avoid visiting in high season. Out of season, when visiting boats are few, you really do feel close to nature and the sea.

Faro

We found ourselves in Faro almost by accident. On Gotland, in the small harbour of Lickershamn, we got chatting to the crew of the neighbouring boat - it turned out that the yacht had sailed in the 1979 Fastnet. We told them we were headed to Farosund (on the main island of Gotland) before going over to

the Latvian coast. The response was: 'Oh, then you should go to Lauterhorn on the island of Faro. It is very special!'

This small port was not even on our radar – *lanassa* draws just under two metres so we tend to focus on larger, deeper harbours. To begin with we could not even find it on the chart, but soon found out enough to confirm it was a viable option. After a sparkling 23nm sail, where we touched eight knots on occasion, we moored up. There was just *lanassa*, a fishing boat and the local lifeboat.

Faro's most renowned resident was Ingmar Bergman, the Swedish film director, who spent the latter part of his life living there and who shot a number of his films on the island. He first visited in 1960, when shooting 'Through a Glass Darkly'. Bergman had wanted to film on the Orkney Islands, but his financial backers thought that was too expensive so he ended up in Faro. He fell in love with the place and moved there with his fourth wife Ingrid. They are both buried on the island in a very peaceful corner of the church yard. Many islanders worked on the films, either as extras or in technical roles, and would protect Bergman when visitors arrived asking where he lived – apparently no-one could remember. Now there is a very interesting museum dedicated to his life and work.

Faro has some fascinating geology, including 'rauk', rock columns formed by erosion during the last ice age. The island is also the home of many sea birds and we made the mistake of cycling just 100 metres from the nesting site of a tern colony. My small backpack had to double as protective head gear as the clacking terns dive-bombed us, while we cycled as fast as we could.

The small harbour of Lauterhorn is a delight. One of the former fisherman's huts contains a library where visiting sailors can take and leave books. The harbour master visited each evening to collect the modest fee and was happy to chat and share his knowledge of the island. The only challenge of Faro was finding a store to restock the boat. But the varied scenery and the wonderful light, together with some medieval

archeological remains and deserted fishing villages, makes Faro quite unique.

Ruhnu

I have saved the best until last. We had originally planned to bypass the Estonian island of Ruhnu on our way to Riga, as we were concerned (again) about the depth in both the harbour and the approach channel. But the owner of *Vagvis*, a 17-metre yacht drawing 2.25 metres, assured us we would be fine and could always follow him (if we could keep up!). We left the Latvian port of Ventspils about four hours ahead of him and beat *Vagvis* to the harbour by only 30 minutes! The entrance was daunting, as there was very little water under the keel and the leading marks and recommended plotter track did not quite match up. We elected to follow the leading marks and were soon berthed safely in a newly refurbished harbour.

Ruhnu is small, approximately twelve square kilometres. The population has generally been around 100-200, though at times has dipped much lower. Evidence of the earliest human activity on the island, probably associated with seasonal seal hunting, dates from 5,000 BC. There has been a permanent settlement on Ruhnu since the Middle Ages and up until the end of the 19th century control of the island

moved between Sweden, Russia, Latvia and Germany. Historically the island has been closest to Sweden but at the end of World War I, the islanders, who were nearly all ethnically Swedish, elected to become part of the newly independent Estonia.

Until World War II, Ruhnu continued to be inhabited by ethnic Swedes who managed their own affairs, continuing to use Swedish law and making decisions by consensus. Families lived in thatched 'longhouses', with the animals kept at one end and the living quarters at the other. During the war, Ruhnu was initially occupied by the Soviet Union and then later by Germany. In November 1943, 75 islanders relocated to Sweden and then in August 1944, as the Red Army advanced again, all but two of the remaining families organized a ship to move the community to Sweden. The islanders asked Estonians on the nearby island of Kihnu to look after their homes and livestock. The island was then populated by ethnic Estonians and some Red Army units. During the Communist era there was significant hardship on the island and all but one of the long houses was burned for fuel. By the 1970's the population had fallen to around 50. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, land and buildings in Estonia, including the island of Ruhnu, were returned to the pre 1944 owners.

Faro rauk. 'Dog Rock'





Utklippan flora

Most of the original islanders stayed in Sweden, though many visit the island regularly and some have established holiday homes there.

Today Ruhnu has seen growth and regeneration. The small harbour, incorporating a ferry jetty, has been built, a power plant installed with a grass air strip nearby. The one remaining Longhouse has been restored and contains a museum. The islanders are charming and welcoming and all we met spoke good English. When I arrived at the museum and asked a lady working in a nearby strawberry patch when it was open, she said: 'Tell me when you want it opened!'. It was the same story with lunch, when the small café was specially opened up and soup prepared, and when we asked to visit the two churches, one of which is the oldest church in Estonia and is a wooden structure dating from 1644. By the end of the day, we felt privileged to have gained a small insight into a unique island community.

I hope readers have been able to get a sense of our wonderful experiences visiting these unique islands. We have reflected on what makes them so special, aside from the seascapes,

landscapes and, of course, the sunsets. For Linda and me, it was the people

we met. In every case we did not feel like visitors, but honoured guests.



Ruhnu. Wooden church dating from 1644, the oldest church in Estonia

Sam's Race

Oli Grogan reflects on a 'Big Day'



Singing and dancing in the rain

Why is it always so serious, why can't it be more FUN?' That was a sentence Sam used often - and not just with sailing. It was the verbal summary of lots of things he'd get involved with. I'm yet to meet anyone who suffered more from FOMO (fear of missing out) than Sam. But then I'm also yet to meet someone who cared more about the taking part rather than the result. The purpose of the 'doing' was, without question, the fun for Sam - results were just the by-product.

It is a sentiment that participants in the first version of 'Sam's Race' seemed to take very much to heart!

Sam loved getting many people together and arranging something fun, his time on the water was a personification of that. The more ridiculous and less serious, the brighter it shone for Sam. Brighter still when it involved his mobile speaker with 'microphone attachment'. That'd be the

major issue with this year's event in his eyes. He'd be adamant that it needed a running commentary - from a pursuit craft with a massive speaker attached.

When the Lightfoot Gang asked the yacht club about putting on an event in memory of Sam, the club thankfully thought of the Brig fleet. Not only was Sam very involved in the fleet - having recently bought, then quickly become immersed in the never ending fettling (half being in pursuit of performance, the other half being just the effort of keeping the thing afloat). 'Wooden 'pets' he called them, in reference to the constant attention racing brigs require.

Looking back after organising the event, it was one that required the two cents from so many of his dearest friends. Credit is also due to the club, which went well and truly above and beyond in trying to satisfy our barrage of seemingly impossible (and quite frankly ridiculous requests). Limited

time, limited resources and a near impossible schedule to fit it in to, they really were the catalysts for making it happen for us. I'd say the race, or perhaps the 'event', was one of the wilder afternoons of my life. While it certainly delivered on many levels, I'd say the biggest thing for us to take away, after perhaps the hangover, was how much fun was had by all.

As many people said on the day, Sam would have loved it.



Prizes for all



Celebrating Prince's win

*Left to right
Robert Lightfoot, James Faulkner, Paul Jowers
William Montgomerie and Sue lightfoot*

Pictures by Stuart Cock



Tom Bowman on the race

It's getting close to 10:00 and the anticipation is building before the start of arguably the most important race of the year, then the 5-minute horn sounds. However, this time the horn was blasted from inside the yacht club by race officer Paul Jackson, standing on the first step just to the left of the bar. Clearly enjoying the novelty, but also trying to remain serious he announces: 'You are in sequence'. The countdown has started. At the front of the room stands a man behind a table covered with an inordinate quantity of 'tots', and the room looks to him for guidance. But still there is an almost embarrassed silence. Finally, someone shouts 'Starboard!' and the room becomes alive with chuckles and chat surrounding the reality that the Le Mans start to this race is going to begin at the bar.

As I scan across the bar at the other 100+ finely honed athletes, clad in

their sailing finery mid-Merse Week 2019 and all looking as bemused as me, it dawns on me - is this a world first? The horn sounds again: 'Four minutes'. The countdown continues and the room becomes more and more excited with each passing minute until PJ reminds competitors that after the 'one minute' he will hand the room over to Steve Johnson for the 'tot'.

As that horn sounds, all eyes turn towards Steve. Now for anyone that has not experienced a tot with Steve, you should. He undertakes this task with true vigour and poise that holds the room. He does a great job once again and with glasses raised, water and rum in each hand, we all drink to our friend Sam.

With that the air horn blows for the start and competitors run, scramble and bundle out of the bar, making their way to their boats at speed in true Le Mans style. With laughing, shouting and some heavy breathing

from a few, it is a spectacle to behold. What a start!

For us to understand where all this began, we need to go back to a mid-winter committee meeting of the greatest fleet of them all - the Brigs. As a member of the fleet, Sam Lightfoot would patch up his beloved boat and join in the antics of a busy schedule of races. He was also a key member of the youth joining the fleet. The banter was arguably better than the sailing and he would always be ready for you after the race, in true Sam fashion, grinning from ear to ear if he had beaten you.

After the loss of Sam, his closest friends wanted to ensure they marked his life in a way to be remembered. With that Oli Grogan voiced his plans for a race, not just a race for winning but for race for Sam, a race with a Le Mans start, a tot and a safety boat full of refreshments for competitors on the way round. What could go wrong?



With all agreeing this would be the race of Mersea Week, the plans were set in motion. PJ would be race officer and create the notice of race, considering the quirky set of parameters requested. The race just had to get signed off by the committee so we could hold it under the banner of the WMYC. With confirmation coming within a couple of weeks, and a draft notice of race interestingly stating that the racing rules were solely at the discretion of the race officer, we knew this was race on! To add to this we heard that three of Sam's friends were resurrecting his brig via the hands of a local boat builder and it would be fit to sail this race in her new livery under the name *Prince*.

In true brig fashion, the race communication was left more to rumour than truth, with several of the fleet taking on the challenge of turning an ordinary Wednesday of Mersea week into a spectacle for everyone to remember. Buckets tied under the fast

boats, the borrowing of sails before the start and even the talk of water pistols and dancing on board were all mentioned. The key was to get as many out on the water as possible, sailors, non-sailors friends and family. And boy, did it deliver.

As the week approached the forecast looked shocking, rain and heavy winds forecast, in contrast to Tuesday's windless drifting. But all were keen. It seemed that the race perfectly captivated the fleet's core values of getting these old lumps of furniture out sailing in the creeks of the Blackwater, and for a great cause nothing was going to stop the race.

The race itself managed to deliver, with even the most honest of competitors cheating at every opportunity. Water cannons, music and dancing onboard and points being deducted from any boat's handicap that was not overloaded with people and drinks were the key highlights. Lucky we've got a few months to recover - before the tots line up for next year's race.



Sam

Smack on Tour

By Richard Haines



Passing Beachy Head

With the luxury of time on my hands this summer, I decided to take my smack *Alberta* on an extended tour of 'foreign' waters, with the aim of entering as many regattas as possible and getting as many Mersea sailors on board as possible.

Alberta CK318, to give her her full title, is very much a local boat – being built at the Aldous yard in Brightlingsea in 1885. She was rebuilt in 2004 by Dan and Barry Tester at Hollowshore.

Leaving Mersea in May, she set sail for the Hamble with local sailors Scot Yeates, Rob Crossley and Colin Garnham aboard. After a quick survey of the Maplin sands, we pressed on past Ramsgate - enjoying a trailing 20 knot breeze. After the Zodiac inflatable had broken away off Dover, we rounded Beachy Head at dawn and headed to the Elephant boatyard in Hamble River after a 36-hour passage.



Cowes Spring Classic



Cowes racing

The Cowes spring classics, over May 18/19, was our first racing event and the boat was joined by more Mersea sailors, including Ross and Conor Wey, Will Crossley, Tom Brown and Dave Mallet. Taking a win in the first race and 4th in the second was good enough to win the gaffers class, after Sunday racing was cancelled due to a lack of wind.

From there *Alberta* pressed on to Falmouth, with Jonathan Latham and Julian Herbert aboard, stopping in Weymouth and Dartmouth en route. The Dart is a beautiful river and Dittisham a favoured spot for lunch. Rounding Portland Bill via the inshore route to avoid the overfalls was nerve racking but successful.

Sailing up the Carrick roads to Restronguet creek *Alberta* drew some confused glares from the local working boats peering at the CK fishing number. Foreigners in town!

A large crew descended on Falmouth for the classic regatta, which was held over the international Sea Shanty weekend. This included local Mersea sailors: Johnny French, Gerard Swift, Chis Conway, Mark Farthing, Dave Mallet, James and Amy Struth, Chris Green, Leafy and Hatty Dumas, plus boat builders Dan Tester and Nick Relf.

Alberta won the first gaffers race with Gerard at the helm and then came second in the next two races, to take second overall. There was some close racing and start line excitement with the Laurent Giles gaff cutter *Dyarchy II*.

We were also awarded a prize for best presented vessel at the parade of sail and *Alberta* was the furthest-travelled boat in the regatta. The crew enjoyed Neptune Rum, the Fisherman's Friends shanty band and the hospitality of the Royal Cornwall yacht club to a full extent!

A young crew of Cameron Dix, Amy Haines and Julian Herbert jumped aboard for the trip back to the Hamble river, ready for the round the Isle of Wight race. We had a good rounding of Start Point and a static night off Portland Bill, until the tide turned fair and we fetched up the Solent at 9 knots.

A crew of 14 gathered for the IOW race, including an old WMYC friend Damian Byrne. We were first gaffer to the Needles, where all became becalmed. Going offshore in search of wind did not pay off and the fleet became becalmed again off St Catherine's point. The wind filled in at 7pm, but the cut-off time of 10pm caused all the other gaffers to retire. *Alberta* raced up the Solent in the dark, but sadly we missed the cut-off time by just 18 minutes.

A young crew of Conor Wey, Rob Crossley and Cam Dix stayed aboard for the trip back to the east coast. Brighton was too dangerous to enter and Newhaven was full, so we pressed on to Eastbourne before heading back to the Orwell for the Pin Mill race.

Next up was Mersea week, which was won by Ross Wey and his crew. This was despite suffering a boom breakage during Tuesday's race. The crew repaired it overnight at Peter Clarke's yard, with help from shipwright David Mills, and returned to win two races the next day.

Finally *Alberta* tackled the Colne smack race. After a knock-down from the squall affecting the whole fleet, *Alberta* prevailed in a tacking match up the Colne with *Maria* to take the Cock of the Colne pennant.

So lots of miles sailed, with many crew new to smack sailing aboard and some success in the racing, made for a memorable year. And a boom to replace.

The other thing we picked up on our travels - was another boat! While in Restronguet Creek we visited Ashley Butler's yard, which was looking after *Bonaventure of Salcombe* for the family of the owner who had sadly passed away. Built in 2013 and featured in the Channel 5 series 'Britain by Boat' with John Sargeant and Michael Buerk, she was very much for sale. We brought her back to Mersea in September, covering 350 miles in 52 hours non-stop.



Racing at Falmouth

Racing Roundup

By Julian Lord



Humdinger

IRC RACING

Following a meeting of owners in early 2019, the decision was taken to revert to the use of the internationally recognised IRC handicapping system for most club racing. Nearly 30 West Mersea-based boats obtained 2019 IRC ratings. While this gave our main racing better standing, it sadly had little impact on the numbers of boats actually competing. The opening and closing series of the season – now with just four races in each, and renamed the May and September

Championships – saw only a few boats regularly racing, and the separate **IRC Sportsboat Series** was dropped through a complete lack of support. The **May Championship** was won by Julian Lord's International H Boat *Humdinger*, ahead of Joe Billing and Bruce Woodcock's Projection 762 *Bananaman* and WMYC Sailing Secretary Jack Davis with *Blackjac*, the leading Sonata. Raced in June, the **Centenary Cup** saw just three boats on the start line, with Leo Knifton's Melges 24 Brandyhole taking home

the trophy. The **September Championship** rather tailed off, with strong winds seeing the final race firstly postponed and then cancelled. *Bananaman* took the win in this series, followed by *Humdinger* and *Blackjac*.

DSC FRIDAY SERIES

As usual, the DSC's Friday Series saw the most competitive racing of the season, with excellent turnouts of close to 20 boats for most weeks in the 14 race series, and seven different individual race winners. The

often having clear air for most of the race. The leading 'Fast' fleet boat *Bananaman* placed third in the series, ahead of Toby Ramsay's self-designed and built sportsboat *Mojito*, Tony Hawkes and Pat Hill's Sonata *Aubie Too*, with Alan Brook's *Mexican Train* the leading Cork 1720 in sixth.

WHITE SAIL RACING

All White Sail racing continues to be scored on the RYA's NHC system, where handicaps change from race to race. The eight race **White Sail Series** was won by Alan Jones Beneteau 29 *Raggerty*, with the Bavaria 34 *Hannelore* of David Curtis and Vic Prior's MGC27 *Skybird* in second and third. Turnouts appeared to be somewhat influenced by the conditions, with anything between

four and nine boats racing, but five boats did complete at least the five races needed for a series score. Only three White Sail boats raced in the DSC **Commodores Regatta**, *Hannelore* winning this race. Richard and Sue Taylor won the **Coronation Cup** race with their Hustler 30XM *Rimfire*, ahead of *Raggerty* and the Moody 31S *Cirrus* of Dave Lewis. White Sail racing finished as usual in mid-October with the **Finola Cup** race, contested by eight boats, with Malcolm Clark's UFO34 *Odessa* winning from Alan Mason and Shirley Swan's Sigma 29 *Dura* and *Raggerty*.

OTHER RACES (LH)

Eight boats raced in the DSC's **Commodores Regatta**, with *Blackjac*'s two second places enabling

Raggerty

Photo: Chrissie Westgate



Photo: Chrissie Westgate

combination of a short sharp race, a few beers and a tasty but inexpensive supper is a proven winning formula. DSC continues scoring the series on Local Handicaps which, wherever possible, are precisely based on IRC ratings by the five-man Handicap Committee. With a win in the final race, *Humdinger* clinched the series after a close battle with Simon Farren's Sonata *Camel*, both boats benefitting from having regular scrubs and making good starts in the 'Slow' fleet, then



her to win the trophy ahead of *Brandyhole*. *Mojito* beat Richard Matthews Ker 51 *Oystercatcher XXXIII* on tie break for third. Having been postponed on its original date, a blustery Saturday afternoon in July saw *Raggerty* win the **Ancient Mariners Race** ahead of John Clifton's Sigma 33 *Starfall II*. The following afternoon, Scot Yeates with his little R18 *Framett* won the **Wallet Cup** race by just 10 seconds from Mike Berry's Finngulf 33 *Rendezvous*, with Steve Johnson's Morrison Micro *Spot Marley* in third, all three sailing single handed. The Ladies Regatta cruiser race was contested on another windy Saturday, Frances Meason helming *Humdinger* again winning the Molliette Bowl, ahead of *Rimfire* (Sue Taylor) and Tish Woulds with *Hannelore*. The season finished as

usual with the **Autumn Trophy** race and the Sailing Committee took a last minute decision to maximise entries by running this not on IRC but on Local Handicaps. A decent nine boats raced with *Starfall II* coming out on top ahead of Ed Taylor's J80 *Java* and Jack Berry's Sigma 8M *Sorcerer*.

MERSEA WEEK

Except for racing being abandoned on the second day through lack of wind, Mersea Week was held in the windiest weather for many years and Race Officer Brian Bolton and his team did well to complete the full programme of keelboat races. The first day saw gusts of over 30 knots, with a Cork 1720 dismasted and a Sonata losing a man overboard through broaching on a spinnaker leg. The best entry for some

years of 13 **Smacks** made a spectacular sight, and despite suffering a broken boom on Tuesday, Ross Wey sailing *Alberta* won the class from Richard Haines' *Kate* and Richard Robinson's *Martha II*. Nick Purdie's *Gracie* was the leading smack in the slow group. The **IRC Sportsboats** needed a tie-break to determine the overall winner – Richard Matthews in his Melges 24 *What A Blast* drawing level on points by winning the final race by just 27 seconds from Toby Ramsay's *Mojito*, and this enabled *What A Blast* to take top slot from *Mojito*, with Martin Gozzett the leading Cork 1720 in third, just ahead of *Mexican Train*. *Humdinger* won the **IRC Cruisers** from Scot Yeates sailing his Holman classic *Stiletto* and John Munns Nicholson 43 *Dark Horse*, whilst in the 10-boat **Sonata** class, *Camel* dominated with four firsts to win from *Aubie Too* and *Wet Endeavour*, the Gozzett Roberts & Shipton partnership. There was a close tussle in the **Locally Handicapped Cruisers**, with Paul Harrison's Beneteau 33.7 *Maverick* winning from Steve Johnson helming the late Frank Reed's Hustler 32 *Tramp*. Paul Harrison also took the prize for the best overall performance in the cruiser classes. Barry Ashmore's *Algonquin* was third up and winner of the division for the slower boats in this fleet, with *Starfall II* in fourth. A second place in the final race gave Peter Clarke with *Tasman* top prize in the **Classics and Gaffers** class, ahead of Richard Bailey's Cornish Crabber *Lahloo* and Timothy Howes Buchanan Saxon *Aelfwyn*. Finally, the **White Sail** fleet was dominated by Jon and Penny French's Oyster 26 *Sea Pie* with four race wins, ahead of James Millar's sister ship *Pipedream*, with *Hannelore* best of the fast boats in third and *Raggerty* in fourth.

THANKS

Thanks as ever go to Brian and Wendy Bolton and their team on *Blue Horizon* for officiating again in a very professional manner for a good number of club races, also to Vice Commodore Paul Jackson who did the same job a number of times when he was not away assisting with the running of events both in the UK and abroad.

Bananaman

Photo: Chrissie Westgate



Dark Horse

Photo: Chrissie Westgate



House Notes

By Alan Jones, Rear Commodore House



Staff summer party

We have gone through a period of change with our kitchen staff and hopefully we can now look ahead to a long period of stability in the kitchen - with our Head Chef Ben ably supported by Sous Chef Michael and Pastry Chef Rachel. Ben hit the ground running, having joined us at the start of Cadet Week, which soon evolved into Mersea Week.

Talking of the latter, Wednesday moved from Round the Island Race and the RNLI Pursuit Race to a day of celebration and remembrance for Sam Lightfoot. The MFOB Fleet and his friends did full justice to the occasion and, thanks to the generosity of the Marfleet family, rum flowed like water. The band-stage was suitably stress-tested!

July's Summer Party, although it rained, was an enjoyable event. Dancing on the lawn, barefoot in the drizzle to the music of 'Better Than Your Boyfriend', daunted few.

The three evenings when bands were booked during Regatta Week, it also rained! However spirits were not dampened and those who attended the functions enjoyed the music of three great bands.

We are lucky to enjoy the attentions of a team of dedicated staff and I am sure that all members would join me in thanking them all for their service to us. I have certainly learnt, during my time on Committee, that a friendlier team one could not wish to meet.

Draught in the Molliette? Yes, finally we can serve a lager and bitter in the upstairs bar. Thanks to the research by

Anna, ½ barrels can be transported via the 'dumb waiter' and all tastes can be catered for in the upstairs bar.

Please be mindful that the Long-Room and Molliette Bar are for the use of members and can be booked for private functions through the office.

October 1 marked the start of the Sunday Carvery season and your House Committee experimented with using the Long-Room for service. That has not proved to be too popular so carveries have moved, once again, to the downstairs bar area. Where the Long-Room has remained popular is with the larger evening functions, such as lecture suppers and themed Friday suppers.

As the year comes to an end we think of the AGM. To those thinking of 'doing their bit' on Committee, I'd only say: 'Your Yacht Club Needs You'.

A note for your diaries, 'RIIS' celebrates her Centenary next year and August 1 and 2 are the dates for that celebration when, hopefully we will be joined by several of the other 'Dunkirk Little Ships' and their crews.

A big 'thank you' to everyone who has worked with me over the past two years on the House Committee, especially for all your 'behind the scenes' work. I'm now standing down from 'House' and I wish my successor every success.



(Very) High Water Springs

Steady as she goes

By **Richard Sharpe**, Rear Commodore Moorings and Boatyards



Phil and Ollie with YC1

This being my first year as Rear Commodore, I'd like to think that the handover has been pretty smooth - as Malcolm Clark and I basically changed places from our previous roles!

Most of the success, we feel, is due to having a very good team of launchmen, which comprises of Philip Cheatham, Ollie Jarvis and Zac Clarke supported by an equally dedicated M&B team. Philip is doing fantastic work as head launchman. Ollie has settled back in very quickly and is doing a sterling job turning his hand to any task required of him. Zac Clarke is just a brilliant young man, who has excellent skills on and off the water and always glad to help without hesitation. They are all very helpful and polite.

New for this season was the introduction of the very popular RIB dock. We are hoping to extend that for next season, for which we already have a full waiting list.

A decision was made, at a fairly late stage before relaunch, to fit a well-deserved new engine to YC2. For many years it has been used as the primary launch, which has contributed to excessive engine hours.

This winter's main job is looking at the integrity of YC1's wooden hull. It is also very likely that a new engine will be required, subject to a full assessment from Peter Clarke's Boatyard and Malcolm and I. Once the old engine is removed, our very own boat builder Geoffrey Hunt will give us a thorough report on the boat's structural condition.

The City Road car park, come winter layup boat-yard, is proving ever more popular as a safe and clean place to store boats over the winter season. Only one issue keeps rearing its head, and that is the lateness of some members vacating their boats space after re-fit. More new taps are planned for this coming spring, on both sides of the site, to further enhance this important facility.

We hope all members and visiting yachtsmen appreciate the late night launch service during summer weekends. We certainly do. (Also see photo below of our planned 'Extreme High Tide Launch Service' provided by Zac Clarke, pick-ups from the lawn or the Coast Inn!)

I am looking forward to next year and its challenges whatever they may bring. Wishing you fair winds and following seas for next season.



Zac takes a road trip

Funny name - great pedigree

By Phil Plumtree



S*wuzzlebubble* was commissioned by Ian Gibbs, a New Zealand businessman, to compete in the 1977 Half Ton Cup in Sydney, where she placed 5th to Bruce Farr design No.65. Ian went on to own a long line of boats of the same name, which comes from his pet names for his two daughters – ‘Swuzzle’ and ‘Bubble’. He achieved his highest accolade of top Individual boat in the Admirals Cup of 1981.

The first *Swuzzlebubble* was designed to meet the parameters of the IOR Half Ton Cup (HTC) level rating rule, at a time when the Kiwi designers Bruce Farr, Paul Whiting and Lawrie Davidson were breaking the mould by producing offshore yachts with pencil thin masts

and wooden centreboards. In this configuration, *Swuzzlebubble* started the 1978 Sydney to Hobart, but withdrew late on the second night as Gibbs considered the conditions in Bass Strait were just too extreme. Although the 31-footer had not broken any gear and her Kevlar-reinforced hull had withstood the pounding without difficulty. Although she did not make it to Poole for the '78 HTC, incidentally attended by many competing WMYC members, she came to the northern hemisphere for the '79 HTC in Scheveningjam – placing 3rd.

Sold away to Ireland in 1980, she placed 1st in the UK Half Ton Cup and 1st in the Irish HTC and competed in many ISORA races, winning the Wolf

Trophy for overall success. In the 80's she was sold to Switzerland. But then the trail goes cold until 2012 when *Swuzzlebubble* was found by Peter Morton in Rhodes, Greece in a very sorry state in. Her hull was largely intact, although the bow was damaged, and her keel was in very bad shape and she had been stripped of all gear. Morton had rescued *Swuzzlebubble* from what might have otherwise been her final resting place, and after a complete refurbishment was fully prepared to compete in what is now called the Half Ton Classic Cup sailed under IRC ratings. Morton won this in 2104, dominating the series, but then sold to Greg Peck, a hardened west country campaigner, who lifted the trophy in Falmouth in 2016.



Swuzzlebubble leading the pack

Swuzzlebubble came under my guardianship in 2017. I had teamed up with Mersea man Jerry Hill, a brilliant tactician and mainsheet hand, and we headed off to Kinsale, Ireland for that year's Classic HTC. Together with a strong crew, and despite our lack of hours practice, we came back mission accomplished, as winners!. Keeping the same core crew was key for 2018, where we came away from Poole Regatta as IRC Southern Area Champions and won our class in Cowes Week. This followed a sparring match with Harry Heijst's superbly sailed *Winsome*, an S&S 41.

On to 2019, and an administrative error on my part meant that most of my crew were unavailable for Cowes



Sorry state in Rhodes

Week. I looked about for regattas and when Ramsgate came up on the radar I made some inquiries and heard good things. We were not disappointed - 20 knot south-westerlies, a fierce tide producing large waves to punch through and surf down for a couple of days, plus some testing light winds coupled with big tides. Ramsgate Week is many regattas in one.

Ramsgate Week itself, an IRC regatta using mid-week results, and a two-race series on Thursday for the Queens cup. All culminating in the Ramsgate Gold Cup single race shoot-out on Friday. At the prizegiving, it is fair to say we were kept pretty busy! The only day we stuttered was Gold Cup day. A code

zero would have helped in the marginal reaching conditions, but we do not carry one in our inventory. We even spotted a Westerly Fulmar with one up in the cruising classes division. They all knew something we didn't - 21 miles of reaching for the Gold Cup is always the course set. Our considerable haul from Ramsgate concluded with an additional cup for 'Yacht of the Week', a final surprise from an incredibly friendly and welcoming Royal Temple Yacht Club. A huge thanks to them for organising the regatta and to my crew who continue top sail flawlessly and make it look, from where I sit, so easy.



The Ramsgate haul

Club Cruises

Brian Warwick the Cruiser Captain introduces another memorable summer

We were very fortunate this year - not only to have a very full cruise programme, but also to have very favourable weather to go with it.

The sun made an appearance for the shakedown cruise in April and stayed with us for every cruise up until the last weekend in Tollesbury. Even then, when strong winds and rain brought our great cruising weather to an end, a number of boats were not deterred from attending and having fun. Tollesbury, along with Bradwell and Heybridge, showed that short cruises are very popular – all three venues saw additional members arriving by car to join in the partying.

With this in mind, and hopefully to encourage people who may be unable to participate in the longer cruises, we have added more short weekend cruises for next season. So look out for the programme, which is now available in the cruising section of the club's website.

Hope to see many of you cruising next year.

Bradwell Cruise and Shake-Down Shield pursuit race

Date: 20-22 April

On Friday 19 April, in beautiful weather, a small forward raiding party braved the broad seas of the Blackwater to Bradwell, with the idea of making an extra-long weekend of it. A group of stalwarts explored the sea-wall walk towards St.Peter's chapel, taking-in some great views of Mersea Island.

Having had a drink at the marina bar, we set off to the King's Head at Bradwell-on-Sea for an evening meal. This

involved a 1.1 mile walk there and back. A convivial evening was had by all, although the food was not as good as when last we visited. The moonlit walk home rounded-off the evening - recommended for future visits.

Saturday morning dawned bright and clear, with a moderate breeze, perfect for yacht racing. *Sea Breeze* acted as start boat and set-off four contestants from the southern start line for a long beat towards No.1 race mark, followed by another across the spring tide to No.2. The boats were not making much progress towards the next mark, so the course was shortened to finish at the North Cardinal beacon at Bradwell entrance. The winner was *Seahawk II* with *Clockwise* second.

At 6.00pm the pontoon party got started. Some 21 of the invitees decided that the pontoon was on the boat, so again the self-draining cockpit became a self-filling one. Canapés were enjoyed by all and afterwards we all went to The Green Man for dinner. This was a riotous affair as the initial booking had been for 14 people. In the end there were 32 people and one dog, sitting down in the Family Room. Four had even driven round from Mersea to join us. The staff rose magnificently to the occasion and food was served in good time.

It had been a long day for some, so they went back to their boats while others went for a drink to Bradwell Quay Yacht Club. This gave the opportunity to examine the facilities on offer for our planned barbecue on Sunday evening. We were made very welcome and the Club Secretary offered the club's cutlery and crockery for us to use. For future reference, the yacht club bar is open every Friday and Saturday night during the summer. Call in and support them, you will be made very welcome.



Sunday dawned bright and with a light breeze. After breakfast another walk was planned on the same route as Friday, on this occasion some of the party turned back before the chapel and others carried on to take in the chapel and the pubs in Bradwell - The Cricketers, the Kings Head and The Green Man.

The barbecue started at 5.00pm. It had been arranged for the bar to be open so there was no need to bring drinks. Another convivial evening was had and again two of the party drove round from Mersea to join in. A few decided to carry-on enjoying themselves on *Clockwise*, with the last turning-in about midnight.

On Monday another bright day dawned and preparations were made for returning to Mersea at about midday when there was enough water to leave Bradwell. The West Mersea Yacht Club lawn was the destination for some, an indication of continuing glorious weather.

Kevin Mullins



Harwich Pursuit Race and Cruise

Date: 18-23 May

This event commenced at near high tide on 18 May. The forecast was not very promising, in that the wind was NNE against an ebb spring tide up the Wallet.

Odessa, having the biggest handicap, acted as start boat. Those who did not race left before high water at about 1200 and the race started at 1300. The three boats racing finished in their starting order, completing the course in time for a barbecue at Suffolk Yacht Harbour.

A pleasant surprise was the wind veering as we travelled up the Wallet, making for a pleasant close-reach all the way. Going into Harwich harbour meant almost a dead run, which somewhat spoiled the enjoyable weather.

New participant in the cruising section, *Grapevine*, was joined by *Kittiwake*, *Rendezvous*, *Odessa*, *Stargazer*, *Hannalore*, *French Mistress* and *Sea Breeze*. Already at Levington for repair was *Sea Weasel*. A diverse and lively barbecue was enjoyed by most, others being a little under the weather.

The next day several of our group moved to Royal Harwich Yacht Club and walked to the Butt & Oyster at Pin Mill for a late Sunday lunch. As usual the food and company were excellent. Others had to head home to be in time for work the following morning.

The rest of the fleet headed back on Monday morning and had a good but slightly wet motor/sail. Only when we arrived home did it rain properly and we went to WMYC for lunch, again delicious.

On balance this was a good weekend that turned out better than expected, given the weather forecast. It goes to show if you make the effort things can turn out to be enjoyable.

Kevin Mullins



Pre-Heybridge Cruise

Date: 29-30 May

The plan was for a short sail to Pyfleet or Brightlingsea, stay overnight there and then take the tide up to Rowhedge next morning for a pint in one of the pubs. We'd then make our way back to anchor overnight on Thursday at Osea, so that we could take a leisurely trip to Heybridge for an 11am lock-in.

Graham and Karen from Colchester Oyster Fisheries offered to show us round the fisheries and let us have the use of a mooring for the night. We had a wonderful sail around to the Pyfleet, then at around 6pm a fork lift truck lifted a 'packing shed' type work boat into the water and it came over to pick us up for our tour.

Graham explained how Colchester provided men to help build Dover Castle and how King John gave Colchester Oyster Fisheries the rights to the river Colne. Karen and Graham explained how and when the spat is laid and how many oysters are taken from the river. He also explained that the two yellow Fishery buoys near Inner Bench Head are there to mark the boundary of the Colne. I'd always thought they were put there for my benefit to mark where I should turn and take the short cut back to Mersea! We were treated to a beautiful sea food supper - many thanks to Graham, Karen and Colchester Oyster Fisheries.

Unfortunately the weather decided not to play ball for the rest of the week, so we decided to sail back to Mersea on the tide next morning - eventually joining the other crews heading for Heybridge.

Mel Daniels

Heybridge Basin Weekend

Date: 1-2 June

Having (loosely) organised the WMYC and Dabchicks Heybridge Basin weekend cruise for four years, I was clearly becoming a bit complacent. So when I phoned Grant Everiss, the Lock Keeper, in the new year to book us in for mid-June, I was surprised be told that there was no room in the lock - as another club had beaten us to it! I was straight on to the 'hot line' hoping our glorious Cruise Leader would come up with some inspiration and Brian duly consulted the tides and came up with the 1-2 June.

On the due date the sun blazed away and it was going to be a scorcher, perfect for the evening BBQ. But not everyone was feeling so blessed. Dave and Debbie Amass on *French Mistress* were gilling around the Quarters, waiting for everyone to convene, when they developed engine problems. As the weather was so exceptional it seemed a pity for them to miss out, so Dave accepted a tow from *Matilda*. We all arrived in plenty of time for the lock-in and once tied up were ready to party!

There was no pursuit race this year as the start time would have been around 8am, which deterred even the most stalwart racers. You can get a bit 'pot bound' on board so a few of us wanted to broaden our horizons with a canal side walk into Heybridge and chance to top up the already excessive supplies at ASDA .

They say the Fastnet race is dangerous, but it's got nothing on the Heybridge Basin weekend cruise! This year's man overboard was the intrepid Malcolm Clark who attempted, and failed, the tricky manoeuvre of stern to prow boat jumping. Even more points awarded than to his partner, who a few years before managed to slip down a 6-inch gap between the quayside and our boat. Malcolm duly bobbed up from the swamp quite a few shades darker and squelched off to the showers to clean up. Who knows, maybe next year Tilly the dog will make it a hat trick?

Heybridge weekend didn't quite seem the same without the



iconic red and white *Pelican*, and the hard-partying Haynes's. Alan Mason's wonderful guitar playing was also missed.

The weather was so marvellous that many boats opted to stay another night and by Monday Grant-the-lock looked relieved to send us on our way. *French Mistress* dumped *Matilda* in favour of some serious motor towing from *Great Escape* and we all arrived safely, tanned and refreshed, back in Mersea.

Christine Lane

Chatham and Limehouse Cruise

Date: 23-30 June

Five boats left Mersea early on the morning of Saturday 23 June taking the last of the ebb tide through the Spitway ready to catch the start of the flood tide to Queenborough, our intended overnight stop.

Clockwise, *Seabreeze* and *Matilda* navigated the Spitway via the usual safe water mark transit. *Kittiwake* and *Stargazer* opted for a new route across, surveyed and recommended by Roger Gaspar who assured me he did this especially for *Kittiwake*'s two metre keel.

On arrival at Queenborough we were all able to raft alongside the all tide landing, making our shore excursion for dinner an easy exercise (no trot boat for us!).

Sunday morning saw an early start to take advantage of the flood tide that would take us to Limehouse (why are all the most favourable tides always early morning?) arriving ready to lock in by mid-afternoon, after which we had plenty of chill-out time with a drink or two to finish the day.

Monday was spent exploring the lesser known parts of London with our unofficial tour guides Julian and Chris. On Tuesday we visited the Sky Garden in Fenchurch Street, posed for a group photograph and enjoyed a coffee whilst taking in the London skyline. To finish the day we had an enjoyable dinner in the company of the members of the Little Ship Club.



On Wednesday we explored more of London again with our very own tour guides, visiting St Dunstan's and All Saints Church, Stepney (the Sailor's Church). We then took a short walk on to a delightful inner city farm, returning back to Limehouse for dinner at the Cruising Association with a talk by the always informative Jeremy Batch.

We were due to leave for Chatham on Thursday, but with strong winds forecast we elected to stay put and continued our exploration of even more of the not-so-well known parts of our capital. We are indebted to Julian and Chris for guiding us and whose knowledge of the area is absolutely outstanding.

Saturday required an early lock out from Limehouse for our return journey to Queenborough, where we all rafted on one big buoy to enjoy and end of cruise drink or three.

Brian Warwick

Summer Cruise to France

Date: 7-27 July

Our start was delayed by a day, but three boats left Mersea at 07.15 on Monday July 8 in perfect sailing weather heading for Ramsgate. *Clockwise*, *Matilda* and *Kittiwake* all sailed through the Spitway using the newly charted, deeper channel and on through Gaspar's Gat in the SW Swin and arrived in good shape at Ramsgate in the early afternoon. In Ramsgate we were joined by *Freya* from Medway YC, old friends of Brian and Jill. After a pleasant evening in the local Italian restaurant, the four boats made an early start to carry the tide down the Gull Stream, across the shipping lanes to Cap Gris Nez and then on down to Boulogne.

We decided that a short rest was in order so stayed two nights in Boulogne. We discovered another good restaurant called 'Le Comptoir' and had a pleasant time meandering round the old city. The forecast remained good for the next week or so, so we left the next morning for Le Treport. We had originally meant to visit St Valery Sur Somme, but with neap tides and two yachts drawing over two metres, we decided to leave it until our return trip.

We arrived in Le Treport to find the little harbour quite full and had to raft up with two boats at one end of the harbour and two at the other. A quick shuffle around next



morning got us all together again. Another lovely French meal that evening, then off for a long motor-sail down to Fecamp in good time for Bastille Night. On our arrival on July 13, we noticed a large number of motor cyclists in town. After dinner at 'La Forchette' all became clear, as hundreds of people started lining the streets and we found ourselves watching a parade of 3000 motorcycles which drove down from the hilltop overlooking the town to arrive alongside the marina basin with serious noise levels at 11.00pm. After an hour of parading, much to the delight of the audience, and us, the town lapsed into silence at midnight.

Sunday was surprisingly quiet, so we explored the town with the inevitable visit to the Benedictine distillery and in the evening watched an amazing firework display right next to the harbour. Another noisy but very enjoyable evening.

Monday, a day of warm sunshine and we visited the Abbey and cathedral and had a long walk around town. After a good meal on board and a decent, quiet night's sleep we left on Tuesday morning at 08.30 for the 15-mile journey to St Valery en Caux. For the first three quarters of an hour we sailed on a close reach in a cold Force Three. Thereafter the wind swung to the NE and on went the engines. We waited for 20 minutes for the road bridge at the Marina entrance to open and motored in through the tidal gate at 11.30am.

St Valery en Caux is a charming French town of which 70% was flattened in 1940 during the defence against German tanks by the French cavalry and the 51st Highland Division. The four yachts stayed here for three nights and explored the historic part of the town, sampling the excellent local produce in its fine restaurants. The fine weather continued with temperatures up in the high 20's. Last night supper in Le Relais de Fleuri, a small restaurant run by a young Algerian couple who specialised in Couscous and Tagine. Spectacularly good food and lovely people.

Friday 19 saw us heading for Dieppe, aided by the spring tide.

Saturday 20 we visit the large Dieppe market, which goes on for miles and miles. Buzzing until the rain storm arrived. We had fortunately nipped into a café for an early beer and avoided the worst. In the evening, the eight of us branched out and went to a recommended Thai restaurant a 15-minute walk from the port. 'Table for eight?' we inquired. 'Certainly monsieur, I will just move this family of four, and their meal, into the corridor and rearrange the room for



you!'. It transpired that you should not believe all that you read on Tripadvisor. The meal was average and a little expensive.

On Sunday morning we left Dieppe for St Valery sur Somme. A delightful town with a challenging entrance complete with seals. Arriving on the evening high tide we dined in a restaurant overlooking the bay and consumed a vat of mussels. Lovely.

Monday 22 July. *Kittiwake* and *Lyra*, who both draw two metres, were a little uncomfortable with the odd shallow patch coming in and decided to decline the offer of four days for the price of three and left for Dieppe and Boulogne on the evening tide. *Clockwise* and *Matilda*, unable to turn down a deal, remained.

We did the obligatory train ride round the bay to Crotoy, involving a leisurely lunch, some cockling and relaxing in front of a closely-fought boule match. With temperatures now in the mid 30's we cooled off and settled for an early night. Wednesday was cooler so another day tripping in the sun. We left early in the morning for Boulogne. Temperatures forecast at 40 degrees for St Valery but Boulogne would only be 34 degrees, with the odd thunder storm due in the afternoon - so off we went!

Departure was delayed until 05.20, when the first signs of dawn appeared. We had, the afternoon before, at low tide, noted that there was a shoal bank immediately before the fifth port-hand marker on the way out. Having successfully negotiated the shoal we followed the buoyage chart scrupulously, never having less than 1.2m under the keel (it was neap tides and there were concerns!).

Six hours later we arrived back in Boulogne to find that the beach was the best place in 37 degrees with a sea breeze providing some respite. However, we were all relieved when the temperature relented a bit and we strolled into town for supper at 'La Maison'. Having grabbed a table just under the canopy and in the cooling breeze we ordered our meal. A moment later the thunderstorm arrived, good solid rain, a lightning display that lasted a good hour and at last a real drop in temperature! We enjoyed our meal and set off to walk back to the boats. As we arrived the rain started again. What timing!

Friday was cooler and we enjoyed some more tourism in the ancient part of Boulogne followed by our last French meal at 'Le Doyen'.



Saturday 27. Off at 7.00 local time for Ramsgate. Weather a little windy with occasional rain but arrived in good order and managed to book into the Thai restaurant for an excellent meal.

Sunday was even worse with strong winds and more rain, a welcome back to England weekend. However, we recovered on the Yacht Club lawn and all agreed that it had been a terrific cruise with near perfect weather.

Jack Davis



Lowestoft and the Suffolk Rivers Cruise

Date: 24 Aug-1 Sept

24 August. *Matilda*, *Clockwise*, *Kittiwake*, *Sea Breeze* and *Playpen* left Mersea at 10.00 for a steady motor up the coast into an eight-knot wind on the nose, to arrive at Felixstowe Ferry at 16.00. John White the harbourmaster led us to five buoys all close together and we settled down to an onboard BBQ and a lovely sunset.

06.00 the following morning saw us cautiously navigating the Deben entrance in thick mist, but all got out into the sunshine in good order. More motoring with a short sail, arriving at Lowestoft at 13.00 where we were allocated berths all together right outside the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club. Hot (30 degrees) sunny afternoon found some of us swimming in one of the little bays created by the recent introduction of thousands of tons of Norwegian granite to prevent coastal erosion and protect Lowestoft's beaches. Quite delightful. Dined in the RN&SYC - they have a new chef with a good menu and we enjoyed a good value meal.

26 August. Another hot sunny day. Swims in the morning plus a visit to ASDA then leaving at 13.45 for Southwold.



The harbour master Peter Simmonds, as usual looked after us really well with berthing next to his office and the showers, with a generous discount on the berthing fees. The weather continued to be hot and sunny so more swimming in the sea was called for. We enjoyed an excellent lunch in the fish restaurant on the riverside and also had a grand BBQ on board. By popular demand we stayed in Southwold for three days and moved on directly to Woodbridge.

29 August arrived in Woodbridge, still in fantastic weather and we had a grand BBQ ashore one night and dinner at the Gallery Restaurant on the other. After a relaxing couple of days, we left for Levington and had a poor meal in the lightship. Maybe somewhere else next year?

Sunday saw the fleet sail back to Mersea after a marvellous summer holiday week. Not a huge amount of sailing but enough, good food, plenty of wine and good company. What more can one ask?

Jack Davis

Burnham Cruise

Date: 14-16 Sept

Blessed with sunshine and no wind, *Playpen* led a fleet of seven boats, including *Clockwise*, *Sea Breeze*, *Grapevine*, *Great Escape*, *Stargazer* and *Golden Fleece*, on a somewhat nervously anticipated trip across the shallows of the Ray Sand. However in the event we were all encouraged by the detailed chart and navigational notes produced by Roger





Tollesbury Cruise

Date: 12-13 Oct

After a summer of fine weather the forecast for the Tollesbury weekend was dire – lots of wind and rain. Not what we wanted.

A total of 12 yachts made the intrepid journey to the marina and were rewarded with dry weather on the trip. But then the heavens opened and it poured down. This put paid to a planned walk around the Tollesbury Wick Nature Reserve. Instead everyone hunkered down on different boats for tea and cakes, or something stronger.

Kevin and I were disappointed that we could not finish the season as we had started - with a warm and sunny pre-dinner pontoon party. Instead 40 people gathered in the Harbour View bar at 6pm for pre-dinner drinks followed by another excellent meal, served by very efficient Harbour View staff. A great night was had by all.

On Sunday morning 25 people returned to the restaurant for a full house English breakfast, to fortify themselves before setting off on the return journey, in very windy conditions, back to our moorings.

Although the weather could have been better it didn't dampen peoples' spirits and a great time was had by all.

Lesley Mullins



Gaspar, following his extensive survey of the area in July. This updated the previous survey of 2011. Thank you Roger for your dedication to this task. It was much appreciated.

All arrived on schedule in Burnham and were joined later in the day by Brian and Gill Warwick travelling by car, having just flown in from abroad. Following one or two (or maybe three!) cockpit parties we made our way to the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club where we all enjoyed a warm welcome, good food and good company.

Following drinks and nibbles on board *Playpen*, Sunday was spent at leisure exploring the local area on foot or, in the case of Jack Davis and Sue, on their impressive folding bicycles. Crews split up for their evening meal in town or the marina. And so to bed.

The return journey across the Ray Sand on Monday held no terrors now as we all realised good timing was of the essence. All in all a very enjoyable cruise despite the lack of wind.

Colin Campbell



A Week on Ocean Scout

Member's daughter **Mary Richardson** takes a voyage with Mersea-based group

We boarded *Ocean Scout* at Town Quay, Southampton on Saturday 24 August. As my parents left us for the beginning of our great adventure, we all introduced ourselves and learned the rules of the boat and about everybody's past sailing experience. The second mate needed to fix something up the mast, so afterwards we were offered a trip to the top in the bosun's chair. This gave me a great view of the harbour and neighbouring boats plus the entire length of the yacht. I was quite nervous, but did manage to get within a foot of the very top.

Unfortunately the other Adventures Offshore (now renamed Offshore: It's Your Adventure) boat had suffered engine damage and so was not able to do the journey with us. On Sunday we travelled down Southampton Water to Gosport to pick up four crew from the other boat, who were doing their Duke of Edinburgh together. This made for more of a squeeze down below, but in the end it was well worth having them on board!

Sunday evening was my first ever Channel crossing in a yacht, motor sailing due to lack of wind and it being in the wrong direction. The following morning we learnt to helm and to trim the sails and to alter course. We were heading for Dieppe in France. Throughout the week we learnt to plot courses and to navigate at night as well as day. We learnt about navigation marks and shipping lights and lanes as well as the 'rules of the road'. We learnt a little about 'col regs' and why small yachts have to give way in small channels and harbours. Also, about life rafts and how the boat was designed effectively to maximise the little space there was.

We arrived in Dieppe at lunchtime on Monday and were taught how to moor up in a harbour. We went ashore and explored the town and walked along its long sea wall and equally impressive big, rocky beach. The harbour was lined with little coffee shops and restaurants, whose fragrances beckoned. We departed Dieppe bound for a long haul to Boulogne, where we stayed Wednesday night. On exploring this busier town we found a really smooth sandy beach next to an aquarium that had a big glass window where we watched the seals being fed. In the morning we awoke to the smell of fresh buttery French croissants.

On Wednesday we left Boulogne and headed past Cap Griz Nez for Dunkerque. Here we visited the Dunkerque war museum 'Operation Dynamo', which tells the story of the British Expeditionary Force's evacuation at the beginning of the Second World War. Afterwards we went into the town - where I left my mark with my head on a lamppost somewhere near the centre! We split into groups and met



Mary (centre back) with young crew

afterward in the local supermarket to shop for the ingredients we planned for the crew supper.

On Thursday we left Dunkerque and sailed to Ostend as our final continental port. We berthed in the Jachthaven Mercator and visited the tall ship moored in the neighbouring basin - admiring the amazing yachts that were all around us. We were briefed on how to row here and then had a mini-race in the marina. During our sails I learned how to plot a course in a ship's log and I learned the name of a completely new sail called the mizzen staysail. We didn't explore the town very much but right next to the marina was a supermarket where I bought some really nice Belgian waffles.

On Friday evening we left Ostend at sunset, making our way across the North Sea overnight. We had a curry supper on departure which, with hindsight, was not so clever as I saw it all again somewhere off the coast of Belgium. We arrived into the Orwell and I awoke to see we were rafted up next to *Offshore Scout*, our sister boat, on a buoy in the river. After breakfast we motored past the big container ships in Felixstowe, which I recognised from my last sail with Adventures Offshore. We were towing *Offshore Scout*, which still had engine problems, up to a small lock where we left her and continued to our berth at Ipswich, being careful not to run aground as the tide was very low. After mooring up for the last time, we wearily began to pack our things and clean the boat inside and out. We cleaned everything from top to bottom, so that by the end of it all I was definitely cream crackered!

WMYC Centenary – 20 years on

By Peter Clements

When you read this you will either have seen, or will have just missed, the showing of the extraordinary film of the remarkable events that were arranged for the centenary celebrations of the club 20 years ago.

There were six specific events, both social and sailing, that made up the celebrations and they were entirely in addition to the normal programme, unless you also include Round The Island, where Steve Scrutton ran his BBC Radio Essex afternoon show from the club lawn. Work started with a separately formed committee three years before the date and there were many hours of planning, construction work and detail that went into the preparations. It is fair to say that the result will probably never be repeated.

The luncheon on the actual day,

Thursday, 24 April 1999. A member's luncheon in the Long Room with the cutting of the cake by the Commodore, Frank Reed, with his ceremonial sword, and the launching of Nick Greville's book of the history of the club. This was followed by the EAORA Pattinson Cup Race pre-party on the Friday evening, (with another cake/sword brandishing!)



What is poignant about the film is the fact that so many of the people who were there are no longer with us.

The Summer Ball, 26 June. Superlatives can hardly describe this monumental event. There were over 560 guests in two marquees. Four bands, three bars, over 100 staff, and The Royal Marines Band in immaculate uniforms.



Marine salute



Starlight night

We had the 'Starlight' Marquee covering the front lawn (which had been levelled since it previously sloped down towards the road). The 'star lights' were made up from 177 metres of black exhibition serge in three wide bands, with 200 lights hand stitched into each. They were constructed on long tables in the Long Room by a small band of volunteers and the job took weeks. There were over 300 guests seated in that marquee together with further tables in the dining area of the main bar.

The 'Palm Court Marquee', decorated with free-standing palm decorations and flowers on the tables, was on the car park. It included a band stand and dance floor, plus an additional tent for a bar, plus separate toilets and another marquee, for food preparation. The big boat shed was reserved as a 'green-room' for the bands.

There was Casino and Cocktail bar in the Long Room, where guests played roulette, craps and black jack under the eye of professional croupiers. The big 'winners' cashed their chips for some wonderful prizes. Finally, there was an Oyster Bar in the conservatory.

A four course dinner, with a smoked salmon and trout starter followed by Beef Wellington and three choices of pudding, was served. There were separate buffets for cheese and coffee available from buffets in both marquees 'til late'.

After dinner the Royal Marines played first in the 'Palm Court' and then in the 'Starlight', although when it came to it, the band could not get to the centre dance floor

because their hats were too tall for the entrance! As a result the four drum/buglers held centre stage with the band on the steps. Somehow this was doubly effective when the buglers played 'Sunset'. Finally they played the 'Arrangement of Sea Songs', including 'Hearts of Oak' and the ubiquitous 'Land of Hope and Glory'. The place went bonkers by the end.

The Casino closed at 2.30am, but breakfast was then served from 2.40am at the buffets of both marquees. Dancing to the two second bands finally ended at 4.00hrs.

I cannot think that anybody who was there will ever forget that night; somehow 4am arrived too quickly. Members and their guests had spent a total of over £40,000, but whilst 'the Ball was over', there was still plenty to look forward to with all the sailing events:



Tense start

The RORC Race from the Lower Pool (below Tower Bridge) on the Thames to West Mersea, via various points in the Thames Estuary, took place in early July. To start an offshore race in the Thames with commercial shipping and the Thames Barrier, was no mean achievement, in fact it is a surprise that we ever got permission! Before the event all yachts moored in St Katherine's Dock, and there was a reception on the balcony of HMS President the night before the start.

A total of 36 yachts sailed from two starts, and the first thing they had to do was squeeze between a large cruise liner that suddenly arrived during the night and parked in the middle of the river, and the South shore, a gap of only some 70 yards! The fleet was at this point going to windward, making it an interesting moment.

This excitement was witnessed by over 100 members on one of the Thames river cruisers, organised by Rae Bailey, who was able to donate £200 to the Centenary fund from the proceeds.

The event was won overall, very appropriately, by Commodore Frank Reed.

The Centenary Regatta. This event also included The East Coast Old Gaffers and the Europe Classic Yacht Association. (Committee members went to Hamburg to persuade some of them to attend!).

The result was again extraordinary. Over 180 boats took part, including probably the greatest number of old gaffers seen on the Blackwater in generations. A Thames barge was chartered to take members out to watch proceedings and in the evening there was an aerobatic display in front of the club, and a traditional jazz band playing on the 'Molliette' balcony.

It ended with a firework display, where £3,000 of fireworks went up in, what the Company described as 'a total Blast', in 10 minutes!

The Sail Past before the Lord Lieutenant. He took the salute from the balcony in this September event. Over 80 yachts took part in various forms of dressing overall, and it concluded with Geoff Wass in the club launch, in blazer and tie, waving the club ensign.

The Trafalgar Dinner in the Moot Hall in Colchester, held on the 21 September, was the final event.

Guests gathered in the Mayors Parlour in all their finery for a champagne reception, followed by the dinner upstairs in the Moot Hall. The 22 large round tables were named after ships in the action and arranged in battle order.

The 220 guests, including the Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff of Essex, and lots of Mayors, were marshalled by our MC Mervyn Rutter. They were then entertained by a string quartet as they sat down to a 'Talbooth' dinner. After key speeches the quartet played their party piece, the ever popular 'Sailor's Hornpipe', that speeds its way to the end as at the Last Night of the Proms.

At the appointed hour two boatswain's whistles sounded from the high balcony, the lights dimmed, and the story of the Battle of Trafalgar, written specially for the event, unfolded as told by a 'member of the crew' on each table.

It was indeed a fitting end to a remarkable year in the history of WMYC.



Trafalgar tribute

Committee Members 2019

Commodore:	Ian Shay
Sailing:	Paul Jackson (Vice-Commodore) Jack Davis (Hon Sailing Secretary) Sue Taylor Tim Hurst
House:	Alan Jones (Rear Commodore) John Munns, Richard Bailey, Robert Hill, Maggie Haddow, Carole Britton
Moorings & Boatyard:	Richard Sharpe (Rear Commodore) Malcolm Clark (Hon Bo'sun) Julian French Paul Tucker
Honorary Secretary:	Tim Wood

In Memorium

Sandy Davis passed away in December 2018
Sandy was a member of the club since 2013.

Colin Lawler passed away in February 2019.
Colin was a member of the club since 1999.

Jeremy Knox passed away in February 2019.
Jeremy was a member of the club since 1987.

Jean Underwood passed away in February 2019.
Jean was a member of the club since 1995.

James Moore passed away in June 2019.
James was a member of the club since 2008.

Frank Reed passed away in July 2019.
Frank was a Long Serving member of the club since 1975.

Shirley Trollope passed away in August 2019.
Shirley was a Long serving member of the club since 1948.

Don Pye passed away in August 2019.
Don was a long serving member of the club since 1952.

Eric Pegram passed away in September 2019.
Eric was only a member of the club since January 2019.

New Members 2019

Full Members

Paul Adams
Richard Austin
Christopher Baker
Dominic Barnes
Jane Barnes
Terence Bowen
Tony Brown
Rosie Brown
Paul Burt
Chris Harris
David Hopkins
Liz Kingsford
Graham Larkin
Karen Lavender
Mark Leigh
Simon Mansfield
Deborah Mansfield
Anne Marfleet
John Mastin
Adrian Mathie
Gary Moore
Margaret Mursell
Robert Mursell
Rebecca Newman
Nick Purdie
Andrew Rosser
Adam Rowe
David Sapsford
Laura Sharpe
William Sharpe
John Welham

Associate Members

Hilary Austin
Mavina Baker
Nick Beavis
Kevin Bentley
Karen Bentley
Connie Bowen
Francesca Brooke
Raymond Buick
Mary Burt
Sarah Doyle-Smith
Sandra Easy
Jayne Eysers
Claire Francis
Ann-Marie Gasson
Jacob Hambridge
Julie Harris
Martin Hughes
Claire Jarvis
Samuel Jarvis
William Ketley
Jacinda Love
Hazel Maclennan
William McAllister
Martin Mears
Peter Millar
Matt Minnis
Susan Moore
Doreen Pegram
Alison Purdie
Paul Rocks
Sophie Rocks
Paul Smith
Jackie Smith
Lee Tyler
Jeni Tyler
Hannah Vinter
Lianne Wheeler
Paul Wheeler
Gavin Whittaker
Wendy Whittaker

Crew Members

Hamish Cock
Victoria Lewis

Cadet Members

Rosie Barnes
Jonathan Barnes
Max Davonport
Scarlett Maclennan
Joe Purdie
Matthew Purdie
Ruby Richardson
Finlay Richardson
Jonah Richardson
Mollie Rocks
Finn Rocks
Amy Struth
Tom Struth
Alexander Tyler

Young Adults

Erin Boyd
Fergus Cock
Archie Harris

Sailing Honours 2019

HUMDINGER

Julian Lord

- 1st Taxi Lewis Salver (Club Championship)
- 1st Quest Trophy (Spring Series)
- 1st Cirdan Trophy
- 1st Lewis Powell Cup
- 1st Peter Vince Trophy
- 2nd Knight Hall Trophy (Autumn Series)
- 3rd Ancient Mariners Salver

BANANAMAN

Bruce Woodcock & Joe Billing

- 1st Knight Hall Trophy
- 1st Ellis Cup
- 2nd Quest Trophy (Spring Series)
- 2nd Taxi Lewis Salver (Club Championship)
- 2nd Peter Vince Trophy
- 2nd Centenary
- 2nd Cirdan Trophy

BLACKJAC

Jack Davis

- 2nd Ellis Cup
- 3rd Lewis Powell Cup
- 3rd Taxi Lewis Salver (Club Championship)
- 3rd Cirdan Trophy
- 3rd Quest Trophy (Spring Series)
- 3rd Peter Vince Trophy
- 3rd Knight Hall Trophy (Autumn Series)

OYSTERCATCHER XXX1

Richard Matthews

- 1st RORC Salver
- 1st EAORA Plaque
- 1st Martin Slater
- 1st Buckley Goblets
- 1st 43rd Light Infantry
- 3rd David Brook trophy

SPIRIT

Paul Scott

- 1st Jack Ellison Trophy
- 1st Coultton Cup
- 1st Sir Travers Humphries
- 2nd Dragon Trophy
- 2nd Pattinson Cup

GOLDEN FLEECE

Michael Wheeler

- 1st Carronade Trophy
- 1st Lawson Trophy
- 2nd Buckley Goblets
- 2nd Perkins Cup

RAGGERTY

Alan Jones

- 1st Blackwater Trophy
- 1st Ancient Mariners
- 2nd Coronation Cup
- 3rd Finola Cup

STARFALL II

John Munns

- 1st Autumn Trophy
- 2nd Ancient Mariners Salver

DARK HORSE

Barry Ashmore

- 2nd Lawson Trophy
- 3rd Buckley Goblets

ODESSA

Malcolm Clark

- 1st Finola Cup

RIMFIRE

Richard & Sue Taylor

- 1st Coronation Cup

FRAMETT

Scott Yeates

- 1st Wallet Cup

HANNELORE

David Curtis

- 2nd Blackwater Trophy (White Sail Series)

RENDEVOUS

Mike Berry

- 2nd Wallet Cup

PARODY

Roger Sydenham

- 2nd Lewis Powell

JAVA

Ed Taylor

- Ed Taylor
- 2nd Autumn Trophy

SALT

Gareth Jordan

- 3rd 43rd Light Infantry

SPOT MARLEY

Steve Johnson

- 3rd Wallet Cup

CIRRUS

Dave Lewis

- 3rd Coronation Cup

Ladies Regatta

MOLLLETTE ROSE BOWL

- 1st Frances Meason
- 2nd Sue Taylor

SILVER TILLER

Jack Grogan

Round The Island

Coconut Trophy

Brian Sargent

Carrington Cup

Ian Low



Inside back: Angus Milgate in *Peace* balancing act

Back cover: Farewell

All cover pictures by Chrissie Westgate



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