

West Mersea Yacht Club

- A tale of rib docks -

- Mersea Island - Friday the 26th of March 2021. Today I knew there would be some unusual activity taking place in the dinghy park opposite the Yacht Club. Curiosity soon led me out of the house and I decided to take a walk down Coast Road.

The day felt grey and chilly as the wind was blowing with its usual stubborn inconsistency but something was different! With spring just begun, the air was gently permeated by the soft scent of burgeoning flowers. As I strolled past the Burma Road Boat Yard, another smell emanated through the atmosphere. A smell that announced the exciting prospect of getting back on the water. I recognised it as the distinctive whiff of fresh antifoul. Boats were being treated with antifouling paint, a sure sign of eagerness to go afloat... Hurrah!

This leads me to the reason for writing this post. As I finally reached the club, there it was. Wow... what a sight! Versadock, a company based in Lymington, had delivered the Yacht Club's latest order: a stock of modular floating rib docks. These are considered nowadays as the most innovative drive-on boat docking system. The space where once laid the dinghies, was presently covered with a multitude of grey squares blocks, all stacked together! Well over a couple of hundreds of them!



An overwhelming thought sprung to my mind:
«well...
they have their work cut out! ».

“Let the game begin!”

The dedicated team, from our Moorings & Boatyard committee, volunteered to put it all together, supported by our launch men. It most definitely saved the club from further spending during this financial Covid crisis.





Firstly, a quick inspection was done of the previously established rib docks, then back on land and so began the daunting task to assemble them...

The team certainly needs recognition for what turned out to be a rather tough, cold and physically demanding job.

I can tell this story because I came down most days to see the work in progress.



In fact, that first day, I went back home and drove down again to surprise them with a picnic lunch and a cafetière of freshly brewed coffee. That certainly set the mood to carry on!

The grey cubes became very handy and I considered, smiling: "after all, these rib docks are turning out to be most useful!".

The following days, Paul graciously took over the provision of food and coffee for the working team. He would take down with him a substantial lunch for all, as a treat.



Day two, Saturday, 27th - Well underway!



The end of a long day...



Sunday? Even so... the work must go on.

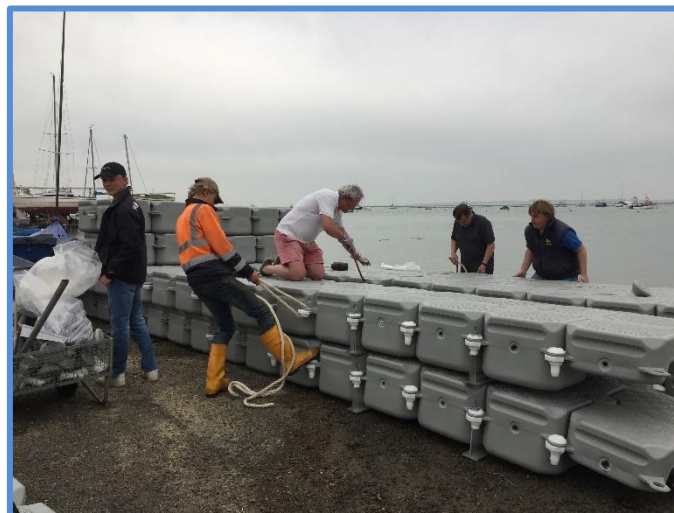


Wednesday, 31st - It is taking shape!

- "Time and tide wait for no man" -



Don't forget to secure the rib docks before they float away!



Earlier on, I mentioned that the project was physically demanding and I seem to have omitted the psychological aspect... In that respect, I take my hat off to the team. Added to the stress and fatigue of working long hours in windy, cold and wet conditions, an invasive frustration prevailed at times! This was due to some packing errors such as: wrong assembling parts delivered (like the beams that fit underneath), specialist tools missing, not enough floats and incorrect plan on how to put it together. A delay occurred. It all became quite challenging in many ways but the team showed a tremendous strength of spirit, camaraderie and tenacity. The primary objective became their ultimate goal: "to get the job done!". That, they did...

Finally, Thursday, 1st April, saw the launching of the rib docks, dragging them ready to float with the rising tide.





A couple more days were required to finish assembling the rib docks to their permanent floating location. As the tide came in, part of the docks was towed and safely secured, for the night, to a mooring buoy while the other segment was being fitted.

The project had taken 7 days of hard work to completion, 9 in total with waiting for the correct or missing parts to arrive. A Versadock representative drove up from Lymington to deliver them personally. It had been a major challenge and an impressive accomplishment.

It reminded me of how the running of the Yacht Club is so reliant, within its committees, on a group of members. People dedicated to its success and acting on a solely volunteering basis! All this activity backstage, too often unseen, that makes the show running smoothly (hopefully) once the curtain goes up!

The construction team consisted of Richard Sharpe, Philip Woods, Paul Tucker and Malcolm Clark on the Mooring & Boatyard Committee and Philip, Ollie and Zack, the club launchmen, who helped during their shift hours.

One of the greatest philosophers, Aristotle, born in 384 BC, at Stagirus, a Greek seaport, once said: "the essence of life is to serve others and do good." What a good and positive thought in this time of Covid struggle. I felt this story had to be told. Well done and thank you to all who freely volunteer to help run our Club and to "the boys" at M&B, who have certainly given their time and efforts above and beyond the call of duty... I will add: "bravo!"

A little more tweaking was still required and voilà... The Drive-on Rib Docks are installed!



*Brigitte Texier-Pauton
Member of WMYC
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