



EASTCOASTER

The Newsletter of the East Coast Old Gaffers Association

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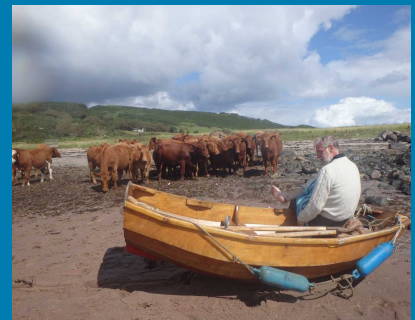
Forestay

As you can see from the list of reports this has been an amazingly busy three months for the East Coast gaffers, with races and rallies for both large and small boats. Many thanks to everyone who sent me pictures and reports of the events, making for an interesting and varied read.

Those of you who also visit the website will find that the reports of these events there are by different people, so it is well worth having a look at both sources! The web site looks slightly different now, having migrated to the main OGA site. We still have all our own content, but it is more easily accessible for all OGA members. Why not have a look at what goes on in the other areas? I recently attended an event in Tarbert that I would not have known about without having a look at what was going on in Scotland.

We then have a couple of short articles, about the potential for adventure in boats of very different styles.

I hope you enjoy reading about what members of the East Coast OGA have been up to so far this sailing season. There are still events to go, like the August Cruise and Ipswich Regatta, so come along and join in!



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Tollesbury Rally

By Sue Lewis

It was billed as Tollesbury vs. the Gaffers and you could certainly say that the Gaffers were on to a winner. We had a cracking race on the Saturday, a nice 'warm up / wind down' in the Sailing Club and then a rowdy party in the pub in the evening with excellent food and good music.

Not a breath of wind first thing on Saturday morning but it gradually filled as the morning went on. 17 small boats launched early but a series of typical start of season hiccups meant that 3 did not start and 3 retired. Particular sympathy was reserved for 2 young Tollesbury lads who tried to launch a Mirror, and then when that failed rushed off to find and launch another boat, and still didn't make the start.

Meanwhile a flotilla of Tollesbury Sailing Club Ribs crewed by a large team of well organised young (mostly) sailing club volunteers escorted the fleet out to the Leavings and the races started on time. First off was the "slow" class including smacks boats and smaller dinghies with the unaccustomed (to gaffers) luxury of a lead boat. This was a RIB with a large white flag which hovered around the next mark to help show the way. "Just as well" muttered some of the gaffer competitors "as this course doesn't seem to be the course announced on the start boat".



Others complained that their pens didn't work on soggy flapping scraps of paper as they milled around at the start – and one keen solo racer was disappointed that with tiller in one hand and mainsheet between his teeth he was unable to recover his pencil from the bilges and then in any case the wind took the fag packet he had hoped to write the course down on.



Fast boats took off a few minutes later including the notorious *Dirty Girty*. She was pretty soon out in front and won her class as well as overall first prize, but whether PTK or his nephew Ed knew the course or were just following the same flag as the rest of us remains a closely guarded secret. *DG*'s guest crew Charlotte from Tollesbury was recognisable by an ear-to-ear grin throughout the race and was nominated by her skipper for a special "under 18s" prize for accepting the challenge of sailing on such a complicated machine (compared to the Toppers she is used to) and for clearly loving every minute of it.

The F3 to 4 from the east at the start was building to a F4 to 5 as the leaders completed the first long lap so the race officers wisely made the

decision not to send us round again (let alone twice more!) and finished the race. One crew was heard to whisper afterwards that it's a very welcome hooter when you realise that you're up with the leaders and the RIB with white flag you've been following is packing up and you can't for the life of you remember the details of the long course you have just sailed and are now supposed to repeat.

Clive Church had built a beautiful tender for *Rhumba* over the winter, a Stornaway 12 called *Bonny*. Barry Edwards, who was guest crew for her maiden voyage, had made her lovely spars but Clive had refused a mast as he had one from a Mirror he wanted to recycle. Sure enough, half way down the creek, bang went the Mirror mast, snapped off clean. So Clive missed his (strong) chances at the Concours d'elegance and Barry has some more woodwork to do.



Laurie, Southwold built in 1980 and sailed by Tollesbury man Simon Lewington, chased after *Dirty Girty* for second place in the fast class and was also a very deserving winner of the Concours d'elegance. Pete and Clare Thomas sailed a perfect race in their smacks boat *Happy Days* and stole first place in the slow class from Tollesbury man Ron Laurie

sailing his beautiful varnished 11ft cat boat for the first time. Pete and Clare also took second place overall.

Cormorant Sails' swanky hand-made canvas duffle bags were not among the prizes this year, thus increasing their street value immeasurably (place your orders now with Steve Meakin) but in addition to the silverware, winners were lucky recipients of



bottles of wine, Cormorant Sails T-shirts and baseball caps. Oh and a couple of spuds. Yes there's a new tradition in the making with a "spud of the day" prize, awarded this year to the skipper and crew of *Halcyon*. Yum and Jas sailed a tremendous race but would have missed out on the prizes had it not been for the picturesque way in which they departed from the marina for the start: Pirouetting gently in the tide they were eventually towed out stern first, an indignity which they suffered with great good humour as if this were a completely normal circumstance (perhaps it is?).

Followers of last year's Tollesbury event will remember that the Seamanship Trophy was awarded to Mike McCarthy who promptly lost it in the dock. Since recovered and cleaned up it was awarded this year to Clive Robertson and Nick Kricka for sheer perseverance in Clive's National 12 named (perhaps not officially) *The Pocket Rocket*. When asked what exactly he thought he had done to deserve the award Clive replied "Not sure really, did a lot of bailer sailing, swimming, fast reaching, capsizing, more bailing, breaking the boat, more sailing, then made it home..." Fair enough.

What of the rest of the East Coast gaffer fleet? Of the 17 boats launched 11 were OGA crewed with a range of rigs represented as photos of the day show. Our smack boat fleet was 6 strong at the launch stage but lost 2 along the way. Mike and Sue Feather raced in *Knot* and *Papa Stour* was sailed by John Scales (aka Johnny Boy) and mate, whilst of the 3 solo-sailed smacks boats only Judy Harrison in *Frolic* completed the course as both Rory Howlett in *Neva* (last year's winner) and George Hutley in *Demeter* were forced to retire with gear failure. Tollesbury winkle brig *Fidget* set off with perhaps the youngest average crew of the day but lost a main halyard block in a gybe and retired, to the great disappointment of Steve's girls Eden and Ruby Lovesee-Clark who watched the rest of the race from a speedboat (such hardship!). Howard Wheelton and Sue Lewis completed the course in a respectable time in a mystery 14ft gunter-rigged borrowed dinghy *Star Delta* that no one would admit to owning. Its sails had seen better days but out of respect for the event organiser and sponsor Cormorant Sails, and for the mystery owner, Howard was discouraged from drawing a large black cormorant logo on each saggy sail before setting off.

Big thank you to Steve Meakin (organiser), Cormorant Sails (sponsor), Tollesbury Sailing Club for efficient race management, safety fleet, supply of beverages to suit all tastes and excellent breakfast, Paul Yull and the Kings Head for marquee, live music and fab food (that paella! Mmmm!) and the weather gods for not doing their worst.



Crouch Rally

Words and picture Sue Lewis



If you saw the report on the EC website then you'll know the race results...but this is the full inside story, warts and all.

North Fambridge was having its very own River festival so VIC 96 was there and Sailing Barge *Thalatta* as well as new OGA member *Pioneer*. Conditions which favoured those coming from the north made it impossible for little *Linnaea* trying to cross the Thames from the south so Rob and Lena sadly couldn't attend but a dozen or so other gaffers did successfully reach the Crouch.

Seven starters in the sunshine in Sunday's race: a nice reach down to Burnham and a gentle beat most of the way home. Ian Kemp on *Pintail of Morra* had dug out his VHF and hooter to be race officer although he claimed he was handling the start only and leaving the rest to Trev. Top marks Ian and Pam for the start. Trev's briefing was rather vague about the only mark of the course ("first green buoy, 13 or 15, not sure which,

anyway it's the first one you get to..." but 6 boats found it and returned to be finished by loud blasts from the ship's whistle of VIC96.

3rd place Tony Judd in his smack yacht *Diamond*, 2nd was *Charm* and the winner was Rik Graham sailing solo in *Kelpie II*.

How long has Trevor been involved in this Rally? It's been going for 30 years and *Aussie II* participated in the very first one in 1985 so there's your answer. Reading the account of that first Crouch Rally by its organiser Brenda Jago (which Trevor had kindly supplied on the back of our place mats for the Burnham dinner back in March) it is clear that the main elements have not changed. OK so this year only 7 started the race where that first rally had 14 starters, but we did have a similar number of boats attending. The NFYC played a vital role as before and the Ferry Boat Inn was on most members' itinerary as previously too. Luckily this year we escaped the broken bones, broken rudders and sudden squalls of that first event – but we still benefited from commemorative gifts (booze – great idea Trev) and plenty of good beer.

Elaine worked miracles in the Clubhouse galley supplying copious amounts of good food at ridiculously low prices as well as keeping a watchful eye on all proceedings – well of course I mean on Trevor. If we didn't give her a standing ovation for all her hard work we certainly should have. I bet they didn't have such a fabulous breakfast 2 days in a row back in 1985.

Special prizes which might also have been awarded :

Trevor (*Aussie II*) for a slickly conducted prize-giving despite having spent the afternoon in the pub, in particular for saying "thirtieth anniversary" several times without once getting it quite right.

Sunbeam for the most overdressed crew: whilst the rest of us set off in shorts and sunglasses (well, a bit more than just that ...) Team *Sunbeam* were going ocean racing. Bet they took a few layers off once aground! Now Trevor about that grounding: weren't you supposed to have supplied them with a local pilot?

Jacinta for a faultless race with beautifully set sails and an impeccable dash back through the moorings. Graham, she looked lovely!

Victoria for having sailed from Harwich despite having been launched only the previous day, suffering from engine “issues” and leaking like a sieve.

John and Jodie *William* for travelling perhaps the shortest distance by water but the longest in total, by public transport, in order to join in for just one day.

Colin Stroud *Plum* for letting Mike McCarthy helm the race and reminding him that sailing is really what it’s all about, and Mike McCarthy for not losing any trophies in the dock this time (but then come to think of it, he didn’t win any to lose, despite pipping *Victoria* at the post to his great glee).

Rob Williamson (*Maid of Tesa*) for supplying some excellent real coffee at breakfast (we’ll need a few more jugs next time please) and for providing the pen with which we all signed the NFYC visitors book to commemorate the occasion. Hope you got that pen back Rob, as no gaffer (or OGA Berm) is complete now without a Teamac pen. If you’re lucky Teamac will give you another one in August.

Booby prize goes to the winery who supplied special 30th Anniversary Crouch Rally wine (go on Trev – say that again, quickly). On the labels they printed “OGA 30th Anniversary Crouch Valley”. Now Trev are you sure you hadn’t been in the Ferry Boat Inn just before you placed the order?

Big thank you to Toby and the rest of the crew at North Fambridge for their warm welcome and cheerful support, to the Club for lending their clubhouse facilities and to Trevor and Elaine ‘hats off’ for working non-stop to make the weekend such a success.

Read Brenda Jago’s account of the first Crouch Rally 30 years ago here:

<http://www.sailing-by.org.uk/content/oga-crouch-rally-1985>

Chatham Rally

Colin "Plum" Stroud

The East Coast OGA rally at Chatham Marina on June 6 and 7 was an enjoyable gathering and Yvonne Mitchell did an excellent job of selecting a location and ensuring boats and people were



© Yvonne Mitchell

brought together for a sociable afternoon followed by an evening meal in a local restaurant. By picking Chatham Marina as the location she created an opportunity for some Essex based members to head south of the Thames for a change. Because all the boats were rafted together this enabled sharing of experiences, memorable discussions, solving the world's problems, much tea drinking and the distribution of lovely food from the good ship *Barbarossa*.

Our committees organise many exceptional events but that does not mean any individual member cannot arrange a gathering at any time between the major ones. This was a good example of a single location rally with no organised sailing or racing that could be organised by any OGA member. If you are planning to be on the water somewhere and would like to meet other gaffers why not spread the word through the website? Send details to your editor, alison.margaret.cable@gmail.com and she will see they go on the website and facebook page, then stand back and see what happens. You may be pleasantly surprised by who turns up.

The Southwold Rally

Clive Robertson



As we cast off from the stern of *Charm*, there were more pints of fluid per second carrying us up the river, than the entire membership of the OGA could consume in an hour - THAT is a lot of liquid. This can only mean we're in the beautifully traditional

Southwold Harbour and waving goodbye very quickly to be taken up the River Blyth at 5 knots under "pole". Keen to get on the water and start having fun, this was a cheeky "reccy" by Nick and myself on the Saturday morning before the rest of the dinghies arrived. We had a nice sail part of the way up the river and back.

The overall turnout for the Southwold weekend event was already looking very positive and Saturday morning saw *Charm*, *Kelpie 2*, *Transcur*, *Gwenili*, and *Quintet* moored in the Harbour outside the club house. With a forecast of 1mph wind, gusting 2mph - that mornings race for the bigger boats had been called off, leaving an opportunity to sail smaller boats up the River Blyth to the pub the following day.

This gave everyone the chance to explore the lovely town of Southwold, and sample the very best local beer, directly from Adnams themselves. On the Saturday evening the sailing club put on some fantastic hospitality and cooked us all a very nice chicken curry.

Everyone that attended was given a box of Adnams beer and a mug,

and two prizes were awarded, both to *Gwenili*. She won the Concours d'Elegance for looking very smart on her first sail of the season, plus the passage race prize, having come all the way from Greenwich in 15 hours. The raffle draw followed, raising £51 for the Nancy Oldfield Trust.



After dinner the OGA thanked the club for hosting us yet again, and the club commodore commented on how wonderful it was to see so many beautiful sailing boats in the Harbour. The club asked to OGA to empty a

barrel of beer that was brought in especially, and before dinner was even finished, we had ensured this important task was complete.

Having sat up with my crew mate Nick until 2am drinking all of our free beer in the tent, the following morning we were treated to one of those rare occasions, opening your tent door to a sunny blissful view - this time of Southwold Town in distance, across the fields that line the river. I always pitch my tent with at least one door facing East, in the hope that we might have a nice sunrise to wake up to.

Alistair Randall, Mike & Sue Feather, and Alison & Julian Cable were also camping for the night, and the smell of bacon and eggs streaming out of our tent seemed to rustle everyone up fairly quickly.

We aimed to cast off at midday and take the flood up to Blythburgh, with the wind on the nose gusting a five over the tide, this would be an exciting but relatively painless beat for everyone setting handkerchiefs

for sails. The first challenge was getting under the “Bridge Across the River Blyth” - The Bailey Bridge that was originally a swinging railway bridge is now a fixed foot bridge connecting Southwold to Walberswick - the home of childhood crabbing adventures. Not only did we have to de-rig the boat, my 6ft crew Nick also had to duck. These are my favourite kind of bridges...

Knot, *Happy Days*, *Charm's nameless dinghy*, and *Awol* made our way up to the pub, through a tight winding channel marked by what I refer to as “Executive Withies” - those that have red and green marks on the top of them! There are many stakes, posts, and disused wooden structures below the water on the Blyth so it's important to stay in the channel, and not cross the transit line between markers.



© Julian Cable

A few members that didn't have small boats met us at the pub by car, and as we arrived at the pub in Blythburgh everyone sat outside with an open view of the river, and spent an hour taking in good food and beer before jumping back in the boats, and running back for the Harbour. This time with a force 4 wind and 4.5 knots of tide both behind us, the sea state was much more pleasant, and we were cracking along.

Timing to de-rig before the bridge was a fun game to play, but using a new mast that I built for *Awo!* only the week before meant we didn't risk it too much. We dropped the sail and mast, deployed a sculling oar, and were spat out into the harbour at a good pace. It was good to have the human mooring warp Will Thomas on board to catch something solid as we slewed across the harbour.

As always at these events, everyone chipped in to help each other get their boats out of the water, and in no time at all, the weekend was over and the small boat contingent were all ready to head home for a Sunday roast.

Reports from the bigger boats talk of a brisk 30-odd mile sail home reefed down to the River Orwell, where the majority of the bigger boats usually reside.

4th Brightlingsea Scouts sail Pioneer, the BIG Gaffer

Sue Lewis and Richard Giles



Sean Walsh started the idea of introducing young people to Gaff Rigged craft when he started running week-end events in Ireland. These have been a great success. East Coast Gaffers saw an opportunity to get in on the act using the sail training "Skillinger" *Pioneer* based at Brightlingsea.

Pioneer is a huge gaffer by Old Gaffers standards at 70ft but the advantage of this was that 10 Brightlingsea scouts from the 'Pioneer Troop' were able to sail on her in the morning and then swap over so 10 more could have a go in the afternoon.

© Richard Giles

East Coast Gaffer *Reverie* sailed around accompanied for a while by *Cormorant* and Mike McCarthy in his motorboat. Now if there's one thing 20 youngsters aged 10-14 came away clear on, it was the difference between Bermudan and gaff rig: "Shiver me timbers" they cried in unison at each passing vessel – but not until they had correctly identified its rig.



Reverie (with pink topsail) © Richard Giles



© Richard Giles

OGA member Judy Harrison was skipper for the day and she started by showing the scouts round the boat and giving them a short history of *Pioneer* – her working life, her sad decline and then her rescue

from the mud. Back on deck the scouts hoisted sails, hauled on sheets, coiled ropes and learnt useful knots with the mate and the bo'sun, and took charge of the heavy helm of *Pioneer* (in pairs) under Judy's watchful eye.

The Scouts were able to benefit from new sponsorship money raised by the OGA to introduce young people to sailing on Gaff Rigged boats. It is hoped that further days like this will be arranged in the future.

Swallows and Amazons

Alison Cable

Thirteen tents were set up in the camping field on Friday night. A cooling breeze made the hot sun very pleasant, but strong winds and rain were forecast for the small hours, so everyone pitched carefully before settling down for a convivial evening in the welcoming Walton and Frinton Yacht Club. The camp-site is well sheltered, so the wind was hardly noticeable, but the lightening and thunder that preceded the rain woke everyone. One of the smaller tents blew down, but its occupier found refuge in the tent next door, and lack of sleep was the only other problem reported next morning!

All the rain blew through in the night, and breakfast was cooked and consumed in bright sun shine before everyone gathered for registration and the briefing.



© Julian Cable

23 boats started the race on a lovely bright and breezy day. Conditions are rarely this perfect for the start, and there was some close racing down the Twizzle towards Stone point. The course took the boats anti-clockwise around Horsey Island to take account of the wind direction, and the sea state became interesting in Hamford Water, with wind against tide. The first three boats opened up a commanding lead at this point, while some boats struggled to beat against the tide.

Safety cover was provided by the Walton and Frinton RIB, Mike McCarthy in his motor boat *Tempus*, (helped by Andy Abraham and Fiona Neal in their inflatable for work inshore), and Alastair Randall in his launch.

There was enough water across the Wade for all the boats to cross without incident, and for the first time in a while the race finished at the Walton and Frinton club line.

First boat across both start and finish lines was *White Diamond*, one of the Walton and Frinton Jewel class classic dingies, closely followed by the firefly *Hellovathing*. First smacks boat was *Neva*, with *Gandalf* second on her first appearance in a while. There were 11 smacks boats in total, up against a varied assortment of other boats, including *Skylark*, a real swallow style boat which was sailed by a young crew, and *Guillimot* who joined in from the trailer section.



Guillemot, last boat home.

The rest of the afternoon was taken up by many of the crews with soaking up the sunshine on the terrace, while more active participants tried their hands at making balloon or rubber band powered cars from cardboard and dowel. Several attempts were made, and some managed to move! Moray McPhail of Classic Marine again sponsored the fun, entertaining the young ones and all of us with his dry wit and humour while awarding the prizes for the collective event.

Dinner was up to the usual excellent standard of the Walton and Frinton YC, and enjoyed by everyone who attended, with a slide show of the day's sailing on display for those who missed the race, and musicians in the bar.



© Julian Cable

The next day dawned bright and warm again, but the forecast was for rain, and there was a hurried striking of the camp site to get the tents away dry. By 1030, when the heavens opened, over half the tents had gone.

The trip to Horsey Island was cancelled, and the weekend ended early, with the boats being hauled out as soon as there was enough water. After the glorious weather on Saturday there seemed little point in sailing in the rain.

There are many more pictures of Saturday's race available to view on the East Coast Gaffers Web site and Facebook, since the weather was so perfect! Watch out for video footage too, which will be available later in the year.



© Julian Cable

Norfolk Gathering

Alison Cable

With *Robinetta* in Scotland I have not had a chance to sail at an East Coast event this year. The Norfolk Gathering is a trailer section event, but being on the Broads it is



© Julian Cable

possible to hire a boat, so Julian and I decided to rent a gunter rigged dayboat from Hunter's Yard.

Sailing alongside the bank, hearing the wind hiss in the reeds, but having enough sail area above the bank to keep going, then tacking without having to worry about back stays... Sailing *Rebel Reveller* in her native environment is a lovely experience!

We were not the only East Coast gaffers to sneak into the event, the Smacks Boats rolled up in force! *Neva*, *Papa Stour*, *Frolic*, *Awol* and *Knot*, joined a selection of Trailer sailors at the Bureside Camp Site. This is beautifully set up for sailing, with their own dyke and slipway, plus access to a stretch of river side mooring.

The smacks boats were rather out of their natural element, and Friday and Saturday's gentle headwinds and adverse tides saw rather more motoring than sailing, although Sunday's short trip down to Acle Bridge used a lot less petrol!

The 2015 East Coast Race

Roy Hart

My crew was Nick Parsons, a sea shanty singer, Cornish sailor, who is a very bad influence ashore, has done a lot of sailing. We left Burnham on Crouch just before 10am Friday wind 4-5-6 westerly. Turned outboard off after 5 minutes and set a working jib only, sped over the flood, keeping in 2 metres of shallow water. Tried to cut across St Peters flats but had to go right out to Yellow Raysands Marker and crossed the bar with 3" under the keel. As soon as the water deepened into the Blackwater we laid the Nass beacon and picked up a mooring off The Packing Shed in a very strong wind.



The Packing Shed crew

© Ian Kemp

Two wonderful plates of seafood with an oyster for £10, great value, went ashore for cheese and port with Mr & Mrs Harley, hailed a rib and went back to *Greensleeves* at 30 knots! Sailed for Brightlingsea, under a jib, rafted up, beer and fish & chips in a shelter on the waterfront, slept well.

Rose at 6am, start at 8am, reasonable start with the 6 metre and other fast gaffers all around us, out to the Bench Head, we could point quite well at the turning mark to beat up the Blackwater.

*Smack Start*

© Ian Kemp

The wind was fickle, on a tack you would end up well in front of your competitors and the next we were right behind! We had built up a small lead on our rivals; at the far turning mark, the Thurslet Spit, there was a steady breeze but not an increase as predicted. Running back against the still strong flooding tide, up went the topsail, which we launched from the boom! The lightweight balloon jib was set with a pole; we pulled away in the shallows with the plate right up.

Well, to our great surprise we won the race outright, the six metre *Sheena* from Oar Creek ran aground along with two others. We all had an OGA Group supper in the Colne YC, the entertainment was of a very high order, many beers were sunk and the dancing was lively. We turned in at 1am.

The trip back to Burnham was horrid, motoring up the Crouch in a very strong westerly head wind, making way under slight lee of the south bank. A pint in the Royal Burnham, drove home dropped Nick off, was supposed to go to a barbecue but fell asleep quite contented with a happy expression on my face, snoring on the sofa. I awoke to Songs of Praise at 6.30pm.

What a wonderful weekend. God Bless the OGA and the British Empire!

East Coast Race Sunday

Although Roy hurried home for his barbecue, then missed it, the rest of the Old Gaffers fleet, plus a BIG (massive) French visitor *Marie Madelein* with crew of 8, headed up river to Wivenhoe on Sunday for a hog roast.



© Sara Adie



© Sarah Adie



© Ian Kemp

When the wrong boat is the right boat

Words and pictures Julian Cable

Robinetta is not the obvious boat for long passages. She is short, wide, deep and heavy with a small engine. We have done what we can with the sail plan and she can do 6 knots off the wind but that hasn't happened to us very often. So we passage plan on 4 knots and have to motor sail much of the time to make it work.

Neither is she a particularly safe boat. We have no idea about her theoretical stability and her cockpit drains straight into the bilges. She used to be self draining but a previous owner put enough lead in her to lower the free-board so that the drain holes are underwater.



But she is strong and stiff and can be reefed single-handed from the cockpit when we need to.

on autohelm in the Minch

So in some ways she is the ideal boat for extended coastal passages. Her limitations force us to plan conservatively. We don't go out if bad weather beyond our experience is likely and we don't try to go further than the crew are fit for. Most importantly we never promise ourselves that we will be in a certain place at a certain time.

The crew too are not the obvious choice for long distance cruising. We

didn't sail until our forties. We get on famously but we do bicker. We are clumsy and forgetful. So we try to sail within, or sometimes just beyond, our comfort zone.

These limitations are liberating. Without fixed goals, failure is impossible. Of course we do set goals, we just don't mind if we end up doing something else. Two that worked both involved weather too calm for sailing. Leaving Anstruther last year I realised we were a week away from a neap passage to Orkney. A flat calm by the Bell Rock encouraged us to put on the tiller pilot and do a 24 hour passage to Peterhead, giving us two extra days to get to Wick. This year we had booked in for the Tarbert Traditional Boat Festival in Loch Fyne but we were 200 miles away in Stornoway. Light airs let us motor sail for two long days so we could get to the Crinan Canal in time.

But more often we change plans to suit the capabilities of boat and crew. The British Isles are a great place to sail or to be stuck in port. Even places you might not think of as tourist destinations.

So, whatever boat you have, however inexperienced you are, go somewhere new.



Anchored in Loch Hourn

A Narrow Escape

Bernard Patrick

It was about three thirty in the morning and our canal boat was moored for the night on the river Stort just north of Sawbridgeworth. It was a hot, humid night after a gorgeous sunny day and we were, unusually, the only craft moored there. It was not quite light and the silence oppressive.



Then, cutting through the quietness came a single word – “hello”. Not a cheery greeting but a soft, ominous sound. Then repeated, again and again. Who would be on the towpath so early – maybe a vagrant wanting a free bed for the night? Madeline said ‘I think you should close the hatch’. I got up, closed the hatch and then looked out onto the towpath. Not a soul to be seen, which was strange, where was the sound coming from?

Again “hello”, but closer and the boat rocked slightly; ‘Somebody has climbed aboard’. This time I got up and peered out of a side window and was alarmed to see that the boat was almost 3 feet from the bank – someone had untied the bow mooring warp. I put on a cabin light, but could see even less, so switched off and looked out of the bow windows.

And saw a man, standing up to his chest in water and hanging on to the bow. Fuelled by adrenalin, I was on the bank in a flash and demanding, with what authority I could muster, what was he doing? (this authority being rather undermined by me forgetting to put my teeth in; well, you try saying ‘emergency services’ without your upper incisors).

He spoke, 'I'm so sorry to disturb you, but I went to a party, decided to walk home, fell in the river and can't get out'. All delivered in a home-counties accent, which was most reassuring. (Very gullible, us northerners).

'Never mind, we'll soon have you out', I said with unwarranted optimism; he was in his fifties, over six foot and built like brick privy. We manoeuvred him to the stern and tried to help him heave himself onto the stern deck, but although the freeboard is less than two feet and the water shallow, it was impossible. He was also getting very tired, so help was obviously needed.

Thank goodness for mobile phones and the 999 system. I was soon talking to the police call centre (in Scotland!), who suggested the fire brigade might be more appropriate and within minutes I was tramping along the towpath into Sawbridgeworth for a rendezvous with a fire engine.

Fire engines don't do towpaths, so I led the crew, with rescue equipment, back to the casualty (see how I now speak the jargon). Here, Madeline had managed to get a rope around our friend to keep his head above water, and was also trying to keep him talking as he was gradually losing consciousness.

The two muscular firemen arrived and, with a quick heave, had our friend out on to the bank and covered in a warm blanket. Next challenge, how to get him home? A taxi was out of the question, no driver would accept a fare who couldn't stand, was soaking wet, covered in mud and grass and with only one shoe.

The senior fireman spoke into his VHF and announced he had arranged a lift. So the last we saw of our new friend was him lurching up the towpath, held up on either side by the patient firemen; then as they neared the road, the brief squeal of a police car siren – hopefully, his lift home.

And so to bed – about five o'clock. We never did get to know much

about our friend; a first name, home town and that it was a very good party. We don't even know if he was married, maybe best if he wasn't; if he was married one can imagine his reception on arriving home.

"Well thank you officer for getting him home – again. And what's the excuse this time? Fell in the river did he? A likely story....., omigod Nigel, where have you been?!"

Upcoming events

Saturday, August 8, sees the annual **Swale Smack and Barge Race**. Organised by Lena Reekie, an ECOGA member, this Kentish Sail Association event has been running since the 1970s. All gaffers are welcome to join in. Contact lenareekie@talktalk.net for more details.

The week long **August cruise** starts on 15th August, a week earlier than normal, and it is also a day shorter to let boats get home on Sunday. The tides mean there is no chance of going into the river Deben either... Instead there is the generously sponsored TEAMAC Regatta on the first Sunday, and racing every day on a variety of courses in the Orwell, Stour, and Harwich Harbour, plus enjoying the hospitality of various marinas and Yacht Clubs in the area overnight.

Book on line now, through clare.thomas@btinternet.com, or call Clare Thomas on 01473 832808. The event is normally fully subscribed, so don't delay!

The Maldon Regatta on 19th September is the last sailing event of the ECOGA calendar. The race, organised by the Maldon Town Regatta committee, is followed by an OGA meal at the Maldon Little Ships Club. Details to follow on the website soon!

Backstay

I hope you have enjoyed this issue of Eastcoaster. If you have any comments, or articles of interest, please let me know at alison.margaret.cable@gmail.com or by post to

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A big thank you to everyone who contributed, and as always I eagerly await your submissions for the next edition! Please get any articles or pictures for inclusion to me by 19th October, and expect your next issue at the start of November!

Alison Cable, Editor



For Sale

£22,000 o.n.o



At 36' on deck, 11' beam and about 5' max. draft, 'Peggy' is one of the larger prawners, sleeping five in two cabins plus WC/washroom. Believed to be built around 1910 by Crossfields, Arnside, she worked out of Mayport with fishing no. MT13.

Her fit has been maintained by current owners for extended cruising. Sails include lightweight racing jib and staysail, topsail and various reaching foresails. All the cruising sails, rigging, spars and hull are in good or excellent condition. Her bowsprit was replaced with one in laminated spruce in about 2005. Engine is a Nanni 4-43HD; 4 cylinder 2.2 litre engine with water cooled gearbox and Brunton 18" self-adjusting three bladed propeller; all new and installed in 2013. 120 litres capacity of diesel. 60 litres of fresh water. Jabsco toilet about 5years old. Nelson cooker, gimbled with two burners plus grill and oven, VHF radio and Garmin plotter new for the 2013 trip. Reflexs diesel cabin heater. Lewmar winches, fenders and two bilge pumps.

Ever-advancing age prompts a reluctant sale.

Contact Phil & Rose-Marie Newman by phone +44 (0)1473 414358 or email philnew50@yahoo.co.uk