



Eastcoaster

June 2008

Issue 75

Forestay



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With this issue, you should find entry forms and details of up and coming events for the second half of the season, including the Southwold rally, which gives me a great excuse for having a picture postcard heading photo.

Most of these events are already on our website www.eastcoastclassics.co.uk, which fact gives rise to a regular discussion point in committee; whether we should publish the same material on two platforms (note use of jargon by ancient editor). Received wisdom is that most members like to get Eastcoaster as a hard copy, but printing and postage costs are forever on the increase and it seems illogical that the Area should spend its meagre resources on sending out, for example, single sided entry forms when these could be easily downloaded from the internet (and incidentally, leave more room for text and pictures within Royal Mail's size and weight limits). But here's the rub, we have no idea how many of our members have access to, or are comfortable dealing with, an on line computer and whether those that don't/aren't would be happy just to turn up to events and enter on the spot – and whether the event organisers would be happy, either. There's no doubt that the internet is magic, and cheap; we couldn't possibly afford to print Eastcoaster in full colour as it appears on the web, or print and distribute the entertaining but lengthy, logs and other stuff presently on the website. I suppose we will eventually be overtaken by technology and the paperback Eastcoaster will become just a memory, but for the time being, I can see no alternative to using both media; what do you think?

Reports

Making Sails - A Visit to James Lawrence

On the east coast, the name Jimmy Lawrence will always be synonymous with traditional sail making; Jimmy started out making the huge sails for Thames barges, often working in the hold of the barge itself, before finding premises in the Colne-side port of Brightlingsea on the Essex coast. Today, the loft is run by Mark Butler and it still concentrates on making sails in the traditional way, properly roped, leathered and hand finished.

Mark's enthusiasm for his craft is such that he regularly opens up the loft to parties of interested sailors, all keen to see how a simple roll of cloth can be turned into something that has shape and power. So it was that about twenty Old Gaffers and friends gathered in the Tower Street sail loft at the end of March to watch just such a transformation. As Steve, one of the sail-makers, deftly marked out the outline of a typical small jib on the loft floor with brads, string and chalk, Mark talked us through the design; from the selection of material – and yes, they still make some cotton sails – its weight, panel width and orientation, to the development of sail shape by curvature of foot and luff and the subtle tapering of the seams between panels. All this shaping is done by eye, relying on the accumulated experience of Mark and his workforce, with sails being literally tailored to suit both boat and owner. When measuring up for a new sail, Mark will note not only dimensions, but factors like hull shape and rigging tension.



galvanised cringles beautifully worked in and with individual robands instead of lacing, eliminating expensive eyelets. At the other end of the spectrum was the massive 3500 sq. ft. gaff mainsail for the 96ft. cutter Mariquita, weighing in at a third of a ton and which required the whole workforce to manoeuvre it through the machine and will need ten crew on each halyard to hoist it. Even this monster was finished by hand; imagine driving your needle through ten layers of heavy-weight cloth, sewing in cringles and leathering corners. But it is this attention to detail and traditional workmanship that Mark is determined to offer to his customers.

Once the aerodynamic design is finalised, decisions then have to be made regarding finishing; he showed two extreme examples, first a small lugsail for a Hebridean boat, with external sewn-on bolt ropes on luff, foot and head and



The evening was concluded with a visit to the Colne Yacht Club for an informal chat with James Lawrence's team and we would like to thank Mark, Sara, Steve and George for giving their time and to the Colne Yacht Club for their kind hospitality.

Mike Robertson and Bernard Patrick

Foulness Rally May 2008

I have a confession to make, I've never attended a Foulness Rally, it being rather too early in the year for both boat and owner and I guess I never will, now that the George and Dragon has closed. The stuck-in-a-time-warp pub seemed to be the area's only attraction, Foulness falling in the same category as Siberia and Scunthorpe – everyone knows where it is, but no-one wants to go there.

However this year, boat and owner were sufficiently well prepared, the forecast so un-typically favourable and the venue moved to the more attractive Fambridge, that I made the effort and what a magnificent weekend it turned out to be. Seamlessly organised by Trevor Rawlinson in his usual I'm-not-sure-what's-going-to-happen-next-but-it-will-be-brilliant fashion, ten boats gathered at Fambridge, (plus Angele Aline, who prudently ventured her seven foot draft no further than Burnham). Local boats Aussie II, Alice & Florrie and Mary Ritchie were there of course, together with Molly Cobbler, Mole and Quiet Days from the Blackwater. Nigel in Quiet Days took the phrase 'shake-down cruise' too literally, bouncing on the Swallowtail Bank for an hour on the way up the Crouch and proving the shortest distance between two buoys can sometimes be uphill. Bonify, Angele Aline and Random were there from the Orwell, but furthest travelled were Maid Marion from Ramsholt and Crow from Faversham, on her way to the Norfolk Broads.

Not only was the weather unusually good, hot sun and steady F3/4 easterlies, but the occasion was special too, as Trevor had arranged for 'Fred's' ashes to be scattered in her favourite river, on the Sunday. But before that ceremony, everyone piled into the smaller boats and sailed up from Fambridge to the limit of navigation (and their bravery) at Battlesbridge. Getting there was a challenge, but not as entertaining as arriving, which provided lots of spectator interest and proved that, like talking to foreigners, when mooring a gaffer nothing succeeds like shouting.

Everyone then repaired to Roy Hart's place for a much needed drink. Roy is well known as an active Old Gaffer, but he is also outstanding as a barbecue bon viveur and laid on a splendid meal, before shepherding everyone to the river for the dedication of new lock gates, an essential part of his Battlesbridge hydro-electric project.



The Fleet at Battlesbridge

But time and tide wait for no-one, not even Roy, and the ebb was already running as boats unmoored and motored downriver to Cliff Reach, to meet up with launches from the RBYC carrying more of 'Fred's' friends. It was at Cliff Reach, 23 years ago, that 'Fred' and Trevor joined the Old Gaffers at the first Crouch rally, organised by Brenda Jago, so it was entirely appropriate that it was at this very spot that the flotilla formed up in a semicircle around Trevor in Aussie II and in a simple but moving ceremony, 'Fred' returned to the river she loved so much.

Everyone then repaired to the Royal Burnham for a few drinks and a pleasant but subdued supper, while on the club pontoon, Aussie II lay quietly with her gaffer friends - job done.

Thanks, Trevor and Roy for organising a memorable weekend and thank you RBYC for your hospitality.

The Crouch Rally 2008

Last year's Crouch Rally was memorable for gales and rain and this year we were hoping for something better, but it was, as the Essex girl said, déjà vu all over again. In fact I read recently that in the 40 years since the date of the 'Whitsun' holiday was fixed, it has been a wash-out 2/3 of the time. I know from personal experience over the last 4 years, that it has blown F7 at some time over the Bank Holiday weekend, but the Old Gaffers have always managed to have a race, on two occasions in the remarkable calm period between storms.

But back to 2008; the forecast as usual was dire, F5-6 on Sat, F5-8 for Sun and F5-7 Mon. and it was surprising to see ten boats on the Fambridge pontoon by Sat evening. As well as a clutch of local boats, we had contingents from the Blackwater and Orwell, but the accolade for furthest travelled went to Martin Hampshire, the skipper of the 23ft Boru, who on his first OGA rally, single-handed down from Woodbridge, via the East Swin. And as it was his first visit to the Crouch, he decided not to stop at Fambridge on the way up, but to go all the way to Battlesbridge before turning round and heading back against tide and the NE 7.

On Saturday evening over 30 crew and visitors sat down to the traditional fish and chip supper, followed by home made apple pie or pear frangipane – don't the gaffers live well? Race officer Don Garman announced, rather optimistically we thought, that the start would be 13.30 tomorrow – the course a dead beat to Burnham and a run back.

It blew old boots that night with torrential rain – inside as well as outside in Charm- and it was a rather wan-looking kitchen crew who reported for duty at 08.00, to prepare the usual bacon and egg butties. The morning crept on with anxious crews drinking tea and closely examining the club's anemometer; but surprisingly, the wind dropped until it was a flat calm by midday, giving the race officer another set of problems. However, the wind came back as quickly as it had vanished and by start time was a nice NE'y F4. The start was sensibly moved to downstream of the moorings, Ian Kemp volunteering Breeze as committee boat, and 8 boats got away on port tack, desperately trying to weather the first bend. It was a day when windward ability and local knowledge counted; Mary Ritchie made an excellent start, closely followed by Charm and these two duelled all the way to the finish, Robert and



Lorna being unable to get close enough to the wily Don to take advantage of their better handicap and finished 40 seconds behind on corrected time.

Mary Ritchie manages to stay ahead of Charm

Behind the leading pair, Transcur and Plum were similarly very close, but Peter in Transcur took advantage of some lucky wind shifts (according to Plum's crew!) and pulled ahead. However there was a certain amount of poetic justice in that Plum's recently revised handicap enabled Colin to take third place ahead of the handicapper himself.

There were tea and buns in the clubhouse before preparing for the evening's barbecue. This was the usual bring-your-own-food arrangement, a fact which had escaped your editor and his skipper, who had to wander around like vagrants until Pam Kemp produced a Red Cross food parcel from Breeze's 'fridge.



Plum fends off Maryll (Photos; Ian kemp)

Then it was prize-giving and an opportunity for visiting Elder Gaffer George Jago to thank, on our behalf, event organisers Trevor Rawlinson and Don Garman and especially Pauline Garman and her team who supplied a constant stream of lovely food throughout the weekend.

True to form, it blew a gale on the Bank Holiday Monday and all but the local boats elected to stay until the Tuesday, when, of course, summer returned. I am making no weather predictions for next year, but I'm certain everyone will have a great time.

Boat name		Start	Finish	Elapsed Time h/m/s	Elapsed Time /mins	Corrected Time	Final Position
Mary Richie	0.950	13:30:00	15:24:00	01:54:00	114.00	108.300	1
Charm	0.932	13:30:00	15:27:00	01:57:00	117.00	109.044	2
Plum	0.85	13:30:00	15:45:00	02:15:00	135.00	114.750	3
Transcur	1.000	13:30:00	15:37:00	02:07:00	127.00	127.000	4
Maryll	0.908	13:30:00	15:55:00	02:25:00	145.00	131.660	5
William	0.925	13:30:00	15:57:00	02:27:00	147.00	135.975	6
Deirdre	0.906	13:30:00	16:16:00	02:46:00	166.00	150.396	7
Ella							
Rose	0.914	13:30:00	16:28:00	02:58:00	178.00	162.692	8

SCAR - Suffolk Coast Against Retreat

No, I hadn't heard of them either, until Rob Williamson, your area president, asked me to accompany him to the Harwich Area Sailing Association AGM. HASA was also new to me, but is a forum for all 26 clubs using the waters between Lowestoft and Walton.

A number of topics came up which may be of interest to gaffers, including

- the Harwich Harbour website (hha.co.uk) is worth visiting and gives latest relevant Notices to Mariners, as well as weather and tidal information including a detailed tidal stream atlas of the area.
- There has been no progress on the Bathside Bay container port development.
- An experimental wave energy platform is to be established off Southwold.
- The lock gates at Ipswich are to be replaced.
- In spite of representations by HASA, the tiny Harwich Shelf buoy will not be replaced by a larger one, as this might confuse commercial skippers.
- Terns are nesting on Stone Point and should not be disturbed. Anyone wishing to land should first advise the Walton and Frinton YC.

We then came to the main subject of the meeting, a talk and discussion about the government's proposals to abandon sea defences on sections of the East Anglian coast and how these can be resisted. This is where 'Suffolk Coast Against Retreat' comes in. It is an organisation of interested parties – sailors, fishermen, landowners – who are trying to persuade the government – in the guise of DEFRA and English Nature – to accept a shorter term view than their present 100 year horizon. The SCAR argument is that, as there is currently huge uncertainty regarding climate change, the authorities should plan to preserve the existing coastline for the next 20 years and monitor progress over that period. The government's position is that it is uneconomic to build defences that will withstand the predicted rise in sea level over the next hundred years, so don't intend to spend any money at all (except for minimum maintenance). At the present time, 90% of flood defence money is spent inland, not on coast defences; but as SCAR point out, a flooded town can be rebuilt, a breached coastline is gone forever.

Bernard Patrick

(Note; this is necessarily a very brief synopsis of a long and detailed presentation, which gave only one side of the argument, but it is an issue which affects us all.)

Angele Aline



Many of you will have seen or heard of Angele Aline, the 55 ft converted French fishing boat, now owned by ECOGA member Ray Dunstone. Built in France at Fecamp in 1921, she was originally named Jean and was 'dundee' rigged (which is the way English fishermen pronounced 'dundis', which in turn is the French for 'dandy', a ketch with a lug mizzen; all very confusing, no wonder she is now a cutter – saves a lot of explanation).

Angele fished commercially right through and after the war, being involved in several wartime distractions, including rescuing allied soldiers from Dunkerque, being sunk by the RAF and then raised by the Germans. In 1963 she passed into private Dutch hands and became a world-girdling live-aboard until age took its toll. After two extensive refits, one in Maldon, she has just had more work to bring her up to MCA passenger carrying standard and has now begun a third career as a charter vessel. In her first season, Ray plans to take Angele to all our EC rallies – wouldn't it be a memorable sight, to see Angele and Pioneer racing up the Blackwater in a good breeze? Then in early August she embarks on a 3 month voyage around Britain, to raise funds for charity.

Details of her itinerary can be found at www.angelealine.org.uk.

Forthcoming Events

Swallows and Amazons

To the average yachtsman, traditional sail means smacks and barges, prawners and bawlies, but the OGA doesn't forget the small boats; the humble tenders and workboats, often clinker built and lug rigged, with a sculling oar for calms. Every year the OGA holds a rally only for open boats in the Walton Backwaters, that Mecca for thin-water sailors. This year the event takes place over the weekend of 5-6th July, organised as usual by Tessa Hodgkinson and again centred on the Walton and Frinton YC; any open boat with a traditional rig is invited along for a couple of days of sailing in the sheltered but shallow creeks and pools of the Backwaters, as well as some onshore entertainment on the beach at Stone Point.



2007 winner Bob Berk in Phoebe

In full flight up the Twizzle

There are good launching, parking and camping facilities at the W & F club and there is also a small marina at the club if you wish to bring floating accommodation. There is usually a good crowd of young sailors and their dinghies and they are especially welcome.

Competitors arrive on the Saturday morning to be welcomed by co-organisers Julia Raper and Sophie Blackburn and the not too strenuous weekend begins with the traditional 'round the island' race (round Horsey and Hedge End islands) followed by a supper in the club. A boat jumble is planned for Sunday morning, so bring your odds and ends to sell. The main event of Sunday is one of Julia's 'challenges', an informal race down to Stone Point, plus some mildly cerebral activity and a picnic on the beach.

There are loads of prizes to be won and it promises to be a great event for sailors of all ages, so send off your entry form now to the treasurer;

Clare Thomas
Green Farm Barn
Barham Green
Ipswich IP6 0QF

For more information, contact

Tessa on 01629 540 601

(tessahodkinson@btinternet.com)

Southwold Rally

This year's Southwold Rally is scheduled for the weekend 19th/20th July and will include a passage race to Southwold on the Saturday, with the Sole Bay race on the Sunday. Meals will be available at Southwold Sailing Club on the evening of Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th July @ £7 per head and Club members can usually acquire take away food from the town on Friday evenings for any of those participants who arrive on that day.



Start of the 2007 Sole Bay race at Southwold

There will be live music on both Saturday and Sunday evening courtesy of Andrew Osborn and friends, as well as the usual OGA scratch band.

We have negotiated a 10% discount on the normal £17 berthing fee at Southwold.

Camping facilities are available at Southwold Sailing club for anyone wishing to tow an open boat to this event.

Contact Mike Robertson tel; 01473 327115 e-mail; koazee5@aol.com for further details.

Pin Mill Race

The Pin Mill SC are holding their annual Smack Race for working or ex-working gaffers on July 12th. Racing starts at 1000. **Details from Paul Webster; tel 01394 386313 or 07710 209167**

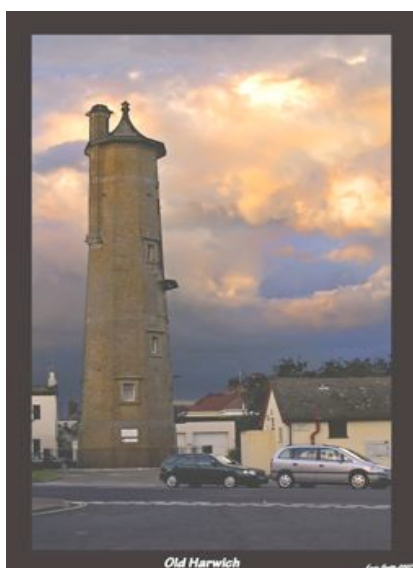
Harwich Sea Festival - Sunday 27th July 2008

The Rotary Club of Harwich and Dovercourt are once again promoting the Harwich Sea Festival, to be held this year on Sun 27th July, on and around Ha'penny Pier on the Harwich river frontage. It includes an eclectic mix of on and off shore activities and OGA members are encouraged to attend with their boats to add colour and atmosphere to the event. Mooring at Ha'penny pier will be free for the day and it is expected that a short race will be organised, starting at 1100. Sounds interesting!

**There is no entry form and more details can be had from Pete Elliston, tel; 01206 391870
e-mail; ptk.elliston@btinternet.com**

Proposed Programme

<u>Quayside Event</u>	<u>Off-shore activity</u>
1100 Harwich Pipes and Drums	1100 ... Old Gaffers
1115 Jazz Band	
1145 African Drummers	1200 Newfoundland Dogs Rescue Display
1230 Harwich British Legion Band	
1300 Grange Co-operative Singers	1315 Sailing Club capsizing display
1330 African Drummers	
1400 Fame Theatre Group	1400 Newfoundland Dog Rescue display
1430 Jazz Band	
1500 British legion Drum Corps	1515 Tug Water Canon display
	1600 Air Sea Rescue RAF/RNLI



- During the day there will be Sea Shanty Singing by the Walton on the Naze Shanty Crew and also members of the Old Gaffers Association, who will have their Historic gaff-rigged sailing ships in the harbour.
- Also you will be able to visit the Steam Tug TID 712, the RAF Pinnacle and if available, the new Trinity House vessel, the Galetea (by kind permission of Trinity House.)
- Subject to operational demands, we are hoping that, in conjunction with the RNLI and the RAF, there could be aerobatic displays during the course of the day.
- Why not take a trip around the harbour. The local ferry service will be available just off the Pontoon in the harbour.
- In addition there will be Stalls, Art Exhibition, Side Shows, Tombola, Arts and Crafts, Bric-a-Brac, Refreshments, and Children's Fun Area.

Kent Events

Although not strictly within the East Coast Area, we have always had strong links with the Medway Cinque Ports area, mainly through the enthusiasm of well known Kent gaffers Lena Reekie and Robert Holden who have regularly made the estuary crossing to join in our events. So it's about time more of us repaid the compliment and ventured into the south seas to sample their events. Lena has kindly provided me with an outline of their main regattas, all taking place in an 8 day window, so no excuse not to take a week off from the east coast and join in.

WHITSTABLE MATCH

The Whitstable Match takes place on Saturday 2nd August. This is quite a small, friendly race/rally including a few barges, smacks and gaffers. Some boats arrive on the tide Friday and stay until Sunday. There is no entry form or fee— anyone interested can either phone me or Whitstable Harbour Office on 01227 274086 – or just turn up. Briefing an hour or so before the start. The harbour does dry out but the mud is quite soft.

SWALE MATCH

A week later – Saturday 9th August – is the Swale Match. This is a big event with 50-80 entries: barges, smacks, bawleys, gaffers, classic Bermudans, Dutch barges, traditional power vessels. Boats arrive in the Swale (Harty Ferry) on Friday and there will be a briefing late afternoon/evening. After the race we gather at Hollowshore for the prize giving - and party with food and music.

For more info and entry form, please contact: Lena Reekie (Match Secretary) on 01795 530309 / 07968 058398 E-mail: lenareekie@talktalk.net.

MCP area has this year decided to move the annual race from June to August. It will be a passage race from the East Swale on Sunday 10th August – the day after the Swale Match - sailing outside the Isle of Sheppey and finishing at Queenborough on the Medway.

For more details contact Jan Holden(MCP Secretary): 01843 582997 E-mail: robertjan@holdenrj.fsnet.co.uk.

August Classics Cruise August 16th -24th

If you own a Gaffer or a Classic Bermudian boat you are invited to join us in our annual August Classic Cruise. This will be the 5th year that we have run this event at this time of the year. Last year we had over 30 boats participating in the various events throughout the 10 days of events we organised. If you like Racing, Cruising, Socialising and just plain messing about in boats then do come along. If you are not a member of the OGA that is no problem. You can sign up at the event and be part of this very successful organisation where we all enjoy all aspects of owning sailing and playing boats.



This year we intend to follow a similar format to last years event but hopefully with better weather. We will start the event with a passage race from your home port to Ipswich, where we have berths arranged in Ipswich Haven Marina. On arriving you will need to sign on and collect the week's sailing instructions as well as some goodies. Sunday is Regatta Day; it begins with a RNLI SEA Check for those skippers who wish to have a chat about safety issues (see note below and tick the entry form if you wish to be take part). Then we come to the less serious side of the Regatta; there is a full programme of events through the afternoon in the wet dock and the opportunity to get wet and have fun. It is hoped that most boats will be able to moor temporarily on the town side of the dock during the regatta, to provide spectacle and interest to the public. There will be a (Bring Your Own Food) Barbecue in the evening



The basic programme for the remainder of the week is:-

Monday: - Race or cruise to Walton Stone Point. BBQ in the evening.

Tuesday:- Penny Hole Bay Race- return to Titchmarsh marina with a meal in the Harbour Lights in the evening.

Thursday:- Drop down from Woodbridge to the Ramsholt Arms for evening meal (or by classic bus if windy!)

Friday:- Cruise to Wrabness on the Stour, beach barbecue in the evening.

Saturday:- Two Rivers Race. Finish at Levington, Suffolk Yacht Harbour.

Sunday:- Presidents Race:- Round the cans and back for a meal and prize giving in the Lightship at Suffolk Yacht Harbour.

You can join or leave us any time in the event and do as much or as little racing and cruising as you like. More details will be posted nearer the event.

Please send in your entry form early to give us an idea of numbers, so that we can plan the event in detail. **Call Peter Thomas on 01473 832808 for info.**

RNLI SEA check at the August Classics

As members of the East Coast OGA we all take the safety of our boats ourselves and our crew seriously. None of us wants to have to call on the emergency services to get us out of trouble. I think there is a particular attitude of self reliance inherent in the culture of the classic boat community, there needs to be just to run most of our boats.

The RNLI does not want us to call the emergency services, particularly themselves, either; they have enough to do already with real unavoidable incidents and the inevitable wallies.

Because of this, the Lifeboat Institution decided to offer a free safety check to yachtsmen to educate us and help to ensure that our boats are fit to go to sea safely. SEA Check is the result, a free safety assessment of your boat and equipment. SEA Check is not a survey, you will not be told off, it is not a bureaucrat with a clip board telling you to fit lifelines to your lovely little yacht to ruin the lines and making her impossible to sail; Terry Corner our local RNLI inspector is a member of the OGA.

Would it not be nice to have an independent knowledgeable fellow yachtsman have a look at your boat and give you an unbiased opinion of your safety systems? I know we all try to sail sensibly but having a second opinion could prove invaluable.

Of course you could book a SEA Check through the RNLI web site, but if you are on a swinging mooring or mud berth you could miss a great sailing day and use more of Terry's, voluntarily given, time than necessary; or you could book a check in Ipswich wet dock by ticking the box on the August Classics booking form. Terry has agreed to carry out a SEA Check on Sunday the 17 August, when all the boats will be together at Ipswich. Good for us because it is virtually hassle free; good for Terry because he does not waste a lot of time travelling between boats.

Give it a go and tick the box, you have nothing to loose.

If you have any queries please contact rikgraham@aol.com

Maritime Woodbridge

The increasingly successful boat-show-cum-rally will be held again at Woodbridge on 13-14th Sept. The ECOGA will have a stand and we hope many gaffers and classics will attend to give an authentic backdrop to the event. Few details available at present, but watch their

website; www.maritimewoodbridge.org.uk, or write to Maritime Woodbridge, Sun Wharf, Deben Rd. Woodbridge IP12 1AZ

The OGA man on the spot is Graham Wadeson tel; 01394 383082.



Two Singles to Manningtree please....

Pete Elliston and Sarah elected not to take Reverie across to Belgium for the Ostend at Anchor festival, but signed on as unpaid crew on Bonify. This is the story, not of the crossing or the Festival, but the trip back, as told by Sarah.....



After a rough crossing, where some of us felt rougher than others, we had a wonderful Ostend at Anchor festival on board Bonify with Sue, Howard and Owyn.

We didn't spend the entire weekend drinking Abbot ale and Maes lager – instead managed to fit in some specialist shopping, seeking out double-ended zips, Dutch Schippen Bitter, Becherovka, filter coffee making equipment while struggling with Central European Time. There were quite a few bands to listen to – with the Hot Rats a firm favourite.

Bonify

Avola, Random, Elfreda and Flamingo from the East coast area were also in evidence and added to the feeling of being home from home. Bonify was staying on another week but Pete and I had to get back to work and it was Brian and Lorna from Avola who suggested the route we eventually took. Our first thought for the return was via Calais but Brian and Lorna's Dutch route had several advantages over Calais:

- 1) timetable information was available for the whole journey, not just as far as the Belgian border.
- 2) we would land in Harwich and avoid the inevitable bank holiday engineering works on the line from Dover.
- 3) added interest of a foot ferry from Breskens to Vlissingen (Flushing).
- 4) the French were blockading the port of Calais.

We dismissed the obvious Eurostar route as being too expensive and Ostend ferries no longer allow foot passengers.

This is the story of the journey made on 26th May told mainly in texts sent between Sarah and Sue, with a few interruptions, and notes taken by Sarah en route.

Mobile phone alarm set for 06:15 but in BST ! Somehow wake up at 05:19 so get up in a grey Belgian drizzle. Sit in tram wondering how early to text Sue without waking her up.

Zeebrugge – cranes just like Felixstowe. Ship being towed into huge sea lock.

Tram on time in Knokke. 5 mins to find bus – turn right out of tram, don't follow the crowd.

Sarah to Sue 07:25 One tram, one bus down, one bus, two ferries and a few trains to go.

Sue to Sarah 07:32 Hope you are enjoying the adventure despite rain. We heard you this morning but missed your departure for the same reason and Howard nearly missed his train. Our cabin clock has now been put to local time.

Foot ferry from Breskens to Flushing, run by Veolia. Seen that name on Tending dust carts. 5.10 euros one way for 2. Stormy! Reminds us of Shetland inter island ferries.

Sarah to Sue 08:33 Looks stormy, but journey flat.

Sue to Sarah 08:36 Hope you get same conditions for North Sea crossing. Breakfast time here!

Sarah to Sue 09:03 And here. Flushing deserted; just missed 09.52 so time for breakfast here too.

No rail personnel around in Flushing at all. No one to ask about rail tickets let alone Harwich ferry ticket. Just a newsagent type shop, and a café next to the foot ferry.

Sarah to Sue 10:03 Just left Middleburg. Couldn't buy a ticket. Dutch machines don't take notes. Unlike me taking copious notes

Sarah to Sue 11:17 Just had to pay 35 euro fine for not having ticket. Apparently should have bought them in the newsagents shop! But lovely conductor let us off with one fine. Sort of fine one get one free.

Very kindly conductor (could have been the sight of us counting out our last euros that clinched it) charged us only one fare and one fine, making us promise to buy one ticket from Rotterdam to the Hook. Vlissingen to Hoek van Holland 62.50 euros instead of 45. Lucky! Next time will visit newsagents.

Sue to Sarah 11:23 Sorry you had a brush with the law. Having a coffee party here. Treacle tart almost gone.

Sarah to Sue 11:44 2nd train leaving Rotterdam. Legit again.

Sue to Sarah 11:56 We are going to take a tram to Knokke. Can you tell us times of trams?

Sarah to Sue 12:01 Your next tram is 13.15 cet then every 15 mins. S.Adie Tours incorporating Zip Quest Ltd.

Sue to Sarah 12:03 Many thanks from Quirky Booze Sourcing Inc

Sarah to Sue 12:57 We are on the ship. Are you on the tram?

Sue to Sarah 12:59 Affirmative. Bonify and Avola all aboard. Hope you have an easy crossing.

Sarah to Sue 13:01 Thank you. Is there anything you're not telling us about the weather?

Sue to Sarah 13:04 Yes! Still strong winds but due to drop about 20.00 BST !!

Time spent reading David Howarth's Sledge Patrol (Sarah), Peter Heaton's Cruising (Pete) and eating chips (Pete, mostly).

Sue to Sarah 18:19 Done Knokke and heading back. Thinking of you on the boat.

Sarah to Sue 18:26 Boat is fine, great way for stormy crossing. Only 1 hr 40 to go. PS if Graham wants to do route, book boat on net to save 15 euros. And buy ticket before boarding train to save 35. Thanks for lovely hol.

Sue to Sarah 18:34 Glad you are (nearly) safely back. We are sheltering from rain in the boat and just starting on beer / wine respectively.

Sarah to Sue 18:39 Land in sight. Gps puts Landguard 40 mins away. Pete on deck – finding cardinals but missing Abbot, I suspect.

Sarah to Mum 19:43 Just arriving at Harwich on return from Ostend. Travelling 14 hours so far.

Arrive on time Harwich. Replacement bus service (bank holiday engineering works). Driver initially insists can only stop at Mistley or Manningtree then concedes The Skinners (bottom of our road) is ok, but draws the line at Tesco Express. Torrential rain.

Sarah to Sue 21:01 Wine open, bath running, rain pouring, fire on, good to be home.

Sue to Sarah 21:08 We are tucked up, but without the bath. Not planning on going anywhere tomorrow. Random leaving at 10am and Avola going north maybe around 2pm. Bonne nuit.

You may be calculating the increase in cost to the journey of the many texts but they were well worth it – sharing the experience with the friends we had just left added hugely to our enjoyment of the day.

Sarah Adie

Backstay

Most of you will have read, at some time, the ‘Confessional’ column in Yachting Monthly and thought ‘there but for the grace of God...’. I have no wish to run a similar column in Eastcoaster, but what follows might make you smile.

Molly Cobbler and I had enjoyed a splendid May Day weekend at Fambridge and had moored Sunday night on the RBYC pontoon. Not wanting to rise at Harry Crackers to catch the ebb down to the Spitway, I and most visiting gaffers elected to leave at about half flood and sneak across the Ray sands into the Blackwater and beyond.

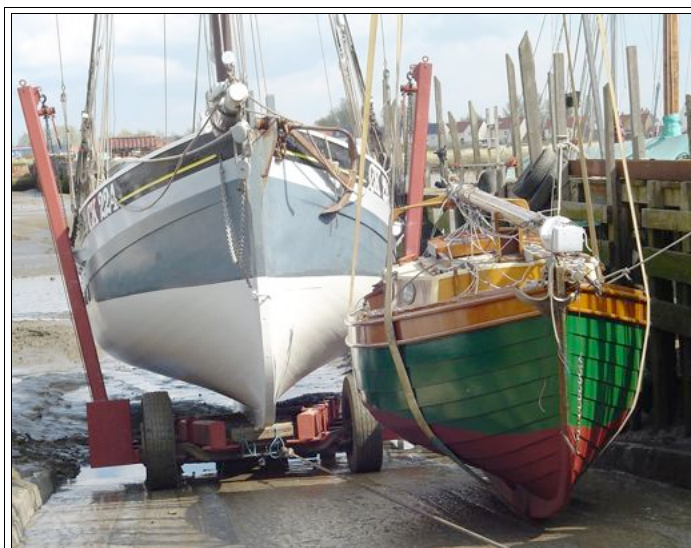
But first I had to turn Molly to face the flood tide; easily done, undo all lines except head-rope attached to starboard foredeck cleat, let tide swing her round, loop warp around cleat on pontoon with end attached to port foredeck cleat, start engine, unhook warp and step nonchalantly aboard to applause from RBYC balcony. (I made that bit up). In with fenders and warps and start the long beat against the near-spring flood. Molly was not going well, I lifted plate and outboard, but no sign of weed, tried short tacking in the shallows but the rest of the fleet disappeared into the haze and I had to resort to motoring from the Roach down to Holliwell point, before thankfully heading north across the sands in about six feet of water, just after high tide. But even with the ebb under her and a 15 to 18 kt breeze hurrying her along, Molly didn’t feel her usual self, so I was relieved to eventually see Bradwell creek approaching. I went onto the foredeck to reeve in the bowsprit and noticed there was a mooring line leading from the port cleat, over the side. I tried to pull it in, but it was fast on something. Yes, - you’re ahead of me here I’m sure – it was fast, onto the starboard cleat! Towing a bight of rope is recommended practice when running down the Roaring Forties, but is no help beating against the Crouch ebb.

That's all for this time; if you have any stories, photos, comments, suggestions or complaints, then send them to the editor:

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Sallie (1907) and Molly (2000), wait for the tide at Downs Road, Maldon.

Not much difference in hull shape in 93 years, just a little downsizing.



Stop Press...

The East Coast Race Results

(Top boats only – see web for more details)

Boat name	class	Year	Owner	TCF	Finish	Corrected Time	Final Position
FANNY OF COWES	2	1872	Nigel Waller	0.896	13:14:46	147.631	1
PRIMROSE	1	1892	Robin Page	1.030	13:13:20	152.783	2
CHITTABOB IV	2	1912	David Barnett	0.983	13:05:46	153.119	3
GREENSLEEVES	2		Roy Hart	0.86	13:29:00	153.940	4
KESTREL	2	1881	James Palmer	0.949	13:14:44	156.332	5
LETTY MAY	2	1976	Nick Hillman	0.860	13:32:30	156.950	6
CHARM	2.	1927.	Robet Hill	0.932	13:22:20	160.615	7
Bona	1	1904	Ian Smith	1.040	13:28:05	169.607	8
MARIA	1		Paul Winter	1.189	13:08:56	171.137	9
GROMIT	2	1997	Trevor Sanderson	0.975	13:27:43	173.274	10

Boat name	class	Year	Owner	TCF	Finish	Corrected Time	Final Position
RHUMBA	2	1962	Clive Church	0.908	13:43:58	148.882	1
CIRRUS	2	1959	Philip Hurst	0.930	14:07:33	174.422	2
ROSE OF ARDEN			Andrew	0.912	14:12:15	175.332	3
FLAMINGO	2	1960	Steve Meakin	0.983	14:03:19	180.200	4
RANDOM	2		Barry Edwards	0.929	14:19:15	185.103	5

