



Forestay

Sorry to go on again about the weather, but it's a popular topic which has dominated the East coast area events so far this season. High winds caused the cancellation of racing at the Crouch and Holbrook rallies and it was a hairy ride for the open boats in the Swallows and Amazons event, but by contrast, the East coast race was shortened and routed up river due to lack of wind. All caused, apparently, by the unseasonably southern track of the jet stream, influenced in turn by the activity of el Nino in the Pacific, or was it la Nina? Whoever, the most troublesome South American since Augusto Pinochet.

In an effort to escape the vagaries of the English summer, your editor took himself off to Perigord in central France, on a cycling tour. Guess what? A big depression formed off Biscay and delivered bands of heavy showers across most of western Europe and sent us scurrying for the nearest bar. A bit like the August Cruise really.



East coast calm



Woodbridge sunrise

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Reports of Events

May Day Crouch rally – May 28th-30th

Saturday's forecast wasn't too discouraging; SW'ly 4-5. So I would get out of the Blackwater, no problem, but the thought of the beat up to Fambridge was off-putting. And what about getting back on the Monday? So when Colin offered a berth in *Plum* I had no hesitation in abandoning Molly at Bradwell and we left in *Plum* about 2 hrs after HW and roared downriver under reefed main and half a stays'l. This sleighride lasted only as far as the Spitway, then it was sails down and engine on to bash to windward all the way to Fambridge, arriving six and a bit hours after leaving Bradwell and in good time for the traditional fish and chip supper at the Fambridge YC.

Nine boats made it to Fambridge, including biggies *Noorderzon* and *Sunbeam* from 'up north' and *Witch*, all the way from Walton.

Sunday was race day; or should have been. The inshore forecast was SW'ly 5-6 but the anemometer in the clubhouse said F7-8, no conditions for a mix of little and big boats short tacking in the narrow Crouch. But breakfast in the club was great, the sun shone for a stroll around to the marina, while race officers Trevor and Don chewed their nails. The start was put back to 13.30 but it was still blowing old boots, so the race was reluctantly cancelled. Everyone was secretly relieved, except Roy 'Death or Glory' Hart, who went off for a thrash about 18.00 when it had moderated a little, taking Jodie as crew, pursued by husband John.

The wind duly moderated to F4 in the evening as forecast, the barbecue went ahead as planned and everyone agreed it had been a splendid event, in spite of the weather. Special thanks to organisers Trevor Rawlinson and Don Garman and to the ever friendly Fambridge YC.

BP



Greensleeves

Swallows and Amazons June 4th-5th

In recent years, the wind has been a bit too much for pleasurable small open boat racing in the annual Swallows and Amazons event in the Walton Backwaters and everyone was hoping for ideal conditions this year, but it was not to be. It was warm and dry on Saturday, race day, but the forecast of NW'ly F3-5 proved all too true and a diminished fleet of 24 dinghies charged around a shortened course, having to round only Honeypot Island. Almost all were well reefed and most survived, the retirements unfortunately including '*Swallow*', the Swallows and Amazons film replica.. The overall winner on corrected time and first 'modern classic' was the *Mirror Yellow Star*; the first smacks boat was *Neva*, the first in the Spirit of Tradition class was *Montmorency*, while *Melisande* was the first traditional gaffer.

Many thanks go to the Walton and Frinton YC for their assistance with the organisation, racing, safety boats, food and generally helping to ensure the event was once again very enjoyable.

BP



Sunbeam

RHS Holbrook rally – June 18th

I was really looking forward to the Royal Hospital School rally, on the Stour; the organiser, Mike Robertson, manages to pack so much into one day - there's lunch at the prestigious public school, followed this year by a recital in the school chapel, racing round the buoys for the smaller boats and down the Stour and back for the bigger ones. Then in the evening there's the traditional barbecue on Wrabness beach, before returning home on the Sunday. This year, most of programme went



Pete, EC president and water taxi driver



Smack boat battle

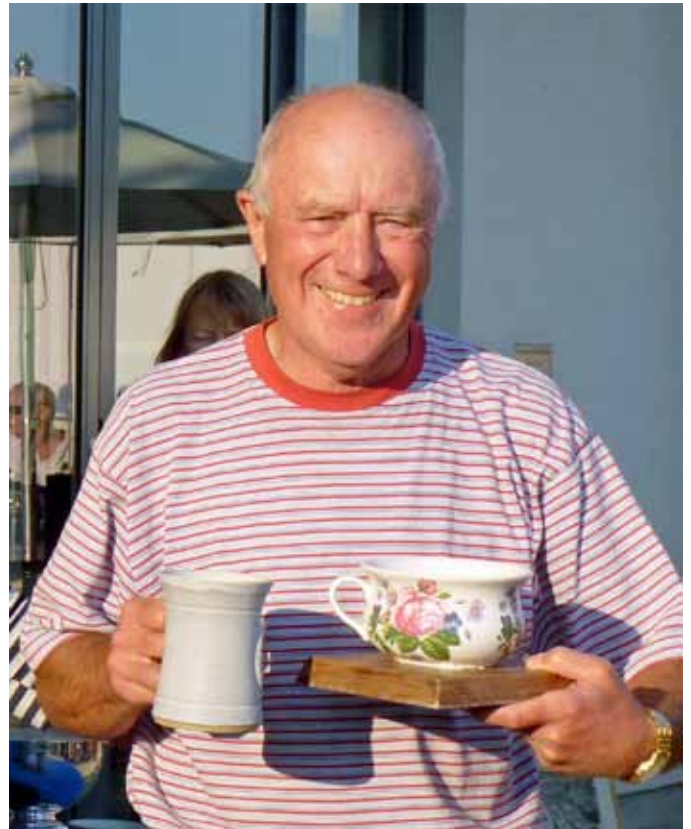
ahead, except for the racing. Only four boats made it to the venue, because of the forecast winds, but there was a good attendance at the dinner and barbecue, with many members arriving by car. Mike had to be quite imaginative when it came to the prize giving – but everyone left with happy memories.



School dinner in the panelled dining hall

East Coast race – July 1-4th

The weather was ideal in the week before the East Coast Area's most important race, warm sun and winds generally F2-3, which suited the passage race to West Mersea and the traditional sea food lunch. But I think last year's sudden gale had skippers worrying, I know I was. However, come the day, it was a different problem – no wind; race officer Peter Maynard was forced to set a shorter, up-river course around the hated cans, in case the forecast SE'ly failed to materialise. The 08.00 start went ahead and the forty seven strong fleet set off in three groups; gaffers, workboats and bermudans. But it was painful progress, with most of the fleet anchoring at least once – *Baldrick* anchoring 3 times, once deliberately, once by running aground and finally when the anchor and chain fell off the foredeck by the Colne entrance. It took me over two and a quarter hours to reach the first mark, #8 in the Colne, about 1 ½ nm. In spite of the conditions, the usual skippers showed their expertise and pulled away; *Letty May* by flying a gossamer genoa and staying with the West shore when the sea breeze first appeared. It eventually filled to about F3/4 to give a run up the river with the flood and a pleasant but tactically unchallenging close reach back downriver and up Colne to finish off Bateman's tower.



A happy Tony Ryan collects the Plodders Pot



Pioneer threads the ECR fleet prior to the start

East Coast Old Gaffers Race 2011 Results

Elapsed time trophies (ie first over the line)

"*Kismet*", 48ft William Fife owned by Richard Matthews won the Sheave trophy for first boat in OGA Class 1 on elapsed time, as well as the Britannia Trophy for the first gaff-rigged boat of any class on elapsed time. Paul Winter's "*Maria*" won the Tom Bolton Cup for first ex-fishing boat over 36ft LOD and "*Dorothy*" (Rob Lee) took the James Dodds Trophy for the first ex-fishing boat under 36ft LOD. First gaffer under 28ft over the line was Maldon smack "*Polly*" which took the Boat World Rose Bowl.

Corrected time trophies (OGA standard handicap)

Overall winner on handicap was "*Wonder*", an Itchen Ferry built in 1860 and sailed by new owner Edwin Bracken. "*Wonder*" took the East Coast Old Gaffers Trophy, with Nick Hillman's "*Letty May*" (1976 Memory) in second place. Two local smacks battled it out for 3rd place with the 1860 built smack "*Fly*" (Martin Worth) beating rival Robin Page's "*Primrose*" (1892) by just a minute and a half on handicap.

"*Letty May*" took the Stone Trophy for the first boat under 50 years old in OGA class 1 or 2.

"*Fly*" won the Davey Trophy for the first East Coast built and registered fishing boat.

The Class 4 Trophy was won by "*Emeline*", in fact the only entrant with over 36ft LWL, and was collected by skipper Stuart Bernthal.

New trophy

The new Brian Deacon Trophy for first lady helm was won by Mandy Stear sailing "*Polly*" and was presented by Brian's daughter Ann-Marie Wright.

Specific trophies

"*Baldrick*", 1980 Memory recently renamed by owner Mick King, took the Pusser's Rum Trophy for the first one-design or thoroughbred racer in classes 1,2 or 4.

"*Charm*", sailed by Rob and Lorna Hill, won the Cruiser trophy (first cruiser in classes 1,2 or 4).

"*Victoria*" won the Hunt Trophy (first ex-working boat in class 2) skippered by Howard Wheelton.

The Austin Edge Trophy for first ferro-cement

boat went to "*Reverie B*" skippered by Michael O'Sullivan.

The Titheridge Trophy for first boat sailed by husband and wife or partners was won by "*Charm*"

The Old Harry Trophy for last to complete the course within the time limit was won by Bermudan folk boat "*Bola*" (Arjan and Sandra Megens) who crossed the finish line just 45 seconds before the time limit was up.

The Plodders Pot is awarded to the last boat home irrespective of the time limit and this year's winner was "*Nutmeg*" (Tony Ryan).

Bermudan trophies

The Tom Felgate Cruiser Trophy for the first Bermudan cruiser on corrected time was won by past president and Elder Gaffer Rob Williamson in his Vertue, "*Maid of Tessa*".

First Bermudan not winning any of the above and second Bermudan on handicap was "*Elfreda*" sailed by Mike McCarthy, with "*Cygnets of Arden*" (Trevor Green) just a few minutes behind.

So in spite of, or maybe because of, the OGA's handicapping system, there was a good mix of old and newer boats of varying sizes. It was also encouraging to see more smaller boats entering.

Full results are appended.

BP and SL

Hellevoetsluis July 27-31st

This is a much condensed version of an excellent blog of the event, by entrant Sue Lewis on Victoria, and available to read on the EC area website.

Victoria, a 114 year old 21 ft. ex Colne police boat, is well known in East coast OGA events, but this was the first time she had crossed the North Sea. Skipper Howard and blogger Sue set out from St Osyth ten days ahead of the event to give themselves plenty of time, but off-putting forecasts, actual bad weather, a fouled prop and calms on the crossing, a diversion to Ostend to refuel and Mike McCarthy's 60th birthday party in Veere, meant that *Victoria* didn't arrive in Willemstadt until the day before the event started.

The first event, billed as a 'fun race' - which makes Sue suspicious that subsequent races may

not be – was a 15 nm passage race to Hellevoetsluis and took place in an almost flat calm. Thankfully the committee shortened the course and eventually the 75 competitors arrived to join the 90 already at Hellevoetsluis.

The real racing started the next day, six races of varying length in generally light conditions. The East coast contingent did extremely well in the 28 strong gaffer fleet, in spite of the Dutch handicapping system, taking the first five places. *Kestrel* was the overall winner with *Fanny of Cowes* second and newcomer *Step Back in Time* third. *SbiT* is a 19 ft Golant Gaffer from Grimsby and had already taken third place in Yogaff and the Round the Island race in her first season. But we shall have to do something about the name – how about Quick Step?

SL and BP



Dutch gaffer Raven



Gaffers crowd at Willemstadt



Young EC gaffers on Clytie

By Mercedes to Morbihan

How a Very Old Lady takes a trip to France on a lorry and comes home not quite in one piece

The old lady concerned is 114 years old; our 3.3 ton 21ft ex-Police patrol boat "Victoria". The plan was to take Victoria to France by road and take part in the "Semaine du Golfe" festival in the Gulf of Morbihan in May this year.

Why by road? Because the south of Brittany a very long way for a little boat to sail in time for a festival so early in the season - and because we wanted to be back to take part in the usual round of East Coast Gaffer events.

Preparations

The only change we made to Victoria was the addition of a tabernacle. We felt it would be useful to be able to raise and lower the mast ourselves easily and quickly. Howard was given a tabernacle from an old Dauntless, too small so he cut it clean in half and welded it back together with an insert front and back and a couple of new cleats for good measure.

The lorry concerned is a Mercedes 7.5 tonner and Howard had quite a bit of work to do to it. First the box had to come off the back and is now standing on blocks serving as a useful shed.

The next step was to bolt on a flatbed. We bought one but, although it came from a similar truck, only 4 of the 14 brackets for attaching to our "gaffer lugger" lined up. Each bracket had 2 bolts so each of those 10 pairs needed new holes drilling and new bolts. 'Pedestrian fenders' and the underrun bar at the back had to be re-instated as well as the light board and number plate. All Victoria's weight would be concentrated on a 4ft x 9" strip (her keel) so the centre of the lorry needed reinforcing. It was very hot dirty work and Howard was grateful for the help given by ace welder East Coast Hon Sec Pete (the Knife) Elliston

Onto the lorry

Victoria was craned on to her new carriage at St Osyth Boatyard on 23rd May and there was much debate and a lot of helpful advice from Andy Harman about how to chock her up. Originally Howard had planned to borrow a cradle, however Victoria's shape didn't suit any available cradle. Instead Howard created a robust wooden structure and added wedges once she was on, all securely screwed into place. Then 4 ratchet straps (one of which had been my birthday present!) plus copious amounts of carpet to protect the paintwork.



Victoria at Morbihan

Journey by road

Some alterations were needed after a test run, so in the end Friday 27th May was VE day. That's 'Victoria in Europe' day. She was strapped on tight, her mast and boom on deck, everything else in the cabin or the cockpit under a stout camouflage net. Auxilliary land transport (bikes) were tied on under her bow, field equipment (tent etc) was in the cab of the lorry, as were field rations to last us to the transport ship. Next stop Dover, then on to Dunkirk.

I had long suspected that Howard's true motivation for this entire caper had been to get into the Freight Drivers' Lounge on the ferry for free coffee, and the broad grin as he posed for a photo by the "STRICTLY freight drivers only" sign confirmed this. For the record the coffee was not worth the effort, the French do it much better.

Calling in at Ostend

No, not a navigational error. We know that Belgium is not on the way to Brittany, but Ostend is only 40 miles from Dunkirk so we couldn't resist taking the opportunity to visit the 'Ostend at Anchor' Festival where we were made very welcome, despite having left our boat behind at a campsite.

Honfleur and onwards

It's 230 miles from Ostend to Honfleur, which was about the half way point of our journey through France to the Morbihan, so we had booked a campsite there to break our journey. We stuck to motorways as much as possible to give Victoria a smooth ride and hoped that her strong double hull would be coping with the odd bumps and bounces which couldn't be avoided. Campsites these days don't have many tents, just caravans and motor-homes, but that night in among the white plastic vans was a strange sight; above the greenery dividing the individual plots could be seen a

pretty white boat afloat on the hedge!

Next morning we enjoyed an excellent coffee or two in the picturesque harbour followed by a chance encounter; we spotted Dutch gaffering pals Rik Homan and Edith towing ex-lifeboat 'Elisabeth'. We gave hot pursuit, blue lights flashing, and apprehended them in the car park. They too were on their way to the Morbihan and we have Edith to thank for photos of our lorry negotiating a tricky corner on the cobbles as we left Honfleur.

Howard did most of the driving but I did take a turn at the wheel, quietly confident thanks to a lesson the week before with HGV Old Gaffer Mike McCarthy (thanks Mike!). We arrived at our launch port, Port du Crouesty, on Sunday evening, took spars and rigging out of *Victoria's* cabin and had our first night on board, still on the truck. Then we spent a busy day raising the mast and rigging her ready for the crane-in on Monday afternoon.

Launch day

The driver of the travel hoist was in a hurry and lacked Andy Harman's gentle touch, although it was only some paintwork and our nerves which he damaged (ouch!). Once safely in the water we joined a growing fleet of festival participants. To our great relief *Victoria* did not appear to be leaking and seemed to have survived the trip. By noon on Tuesday we were ready and headed out into Atlantic waters for the first time,

though we weren't in the ocean for long as we entered the shelter of the Gulf of Morbihan.

Festival!

The first gathering of the "Semaine du Golfe" festival on Tuesday, was a Garden Party on the Ile d'Arz. The organisers had warned us to bring a picnic in case 800 portions of paella wasn't enough! We sailed right in close and anchored just off the beach where we could see Rik and Edith's "*Elisabeth*" at anchor. The music (Breton bagpipes) was quite loud enough and the crowds milling around the paella tent convinced us to eat our baguette on board and watch the Breton dancing from a safe distance.

Eventually we sailed off to sign up with our "flotilla". There were over 1300 boats signed up for the festival and after this first event we were divided up into 8 fleets. *Victoria* would of course be in the fleet of ex-working boats. There were 120 of us, mostly ex-fishing boats but quite a variety. *Victoria* with her white gloss topsides was at the more 'yachty' end of the spectrum - there was a lot of dark matt paint and tar about. She was also one of the smallest boats.

For the next three days we sailed about in the Gulf and as we sailed we crossed the paths of the other fleets heading to other ports - at times it was really quite chaotic. In the evenings we ate local oysters ashore, had crew suppers in marquees and were generally very well looked after. I cranked up my



Big stuff at Vannes

French as we mingled with local sailors and there was much sketching of boats and rigs on the paper table cloths. New friends were made over the cheery din of the Oompah Band or the Shanty singers or whoever was making music at the time.

Moored up in Bono up the Auray river on Thursday we made a fine sight: The 'tall ships', the local 'Sinagot' fishing luggers and the engineless Basque 'sail and oar' boats took pride of place on the quay, the rest of us rafted up on fore and aft moorings in a long line down the river. Big crowds of spectators had given up spectating and were drinking and eating and dancing and singing. At Vannes on Friday we cooked up some supper on board, had a front row seat for the festivities ashore against the backdrop of the beautiful medieval town, and as the light faded multi-coloured spotlights illuminated the rigging and sails of 120 lovely old working boats. It was glorious!

La Grande Parade – and Calamity!

Saturday started well. Molly (Dutch OGA) joined with us for the day and we had a lovely quiet morning. We ignored instructions in true Gallic style, left the *melée* behind and took a back route, drifting gently along under staysail alone, enjoying the scenery.

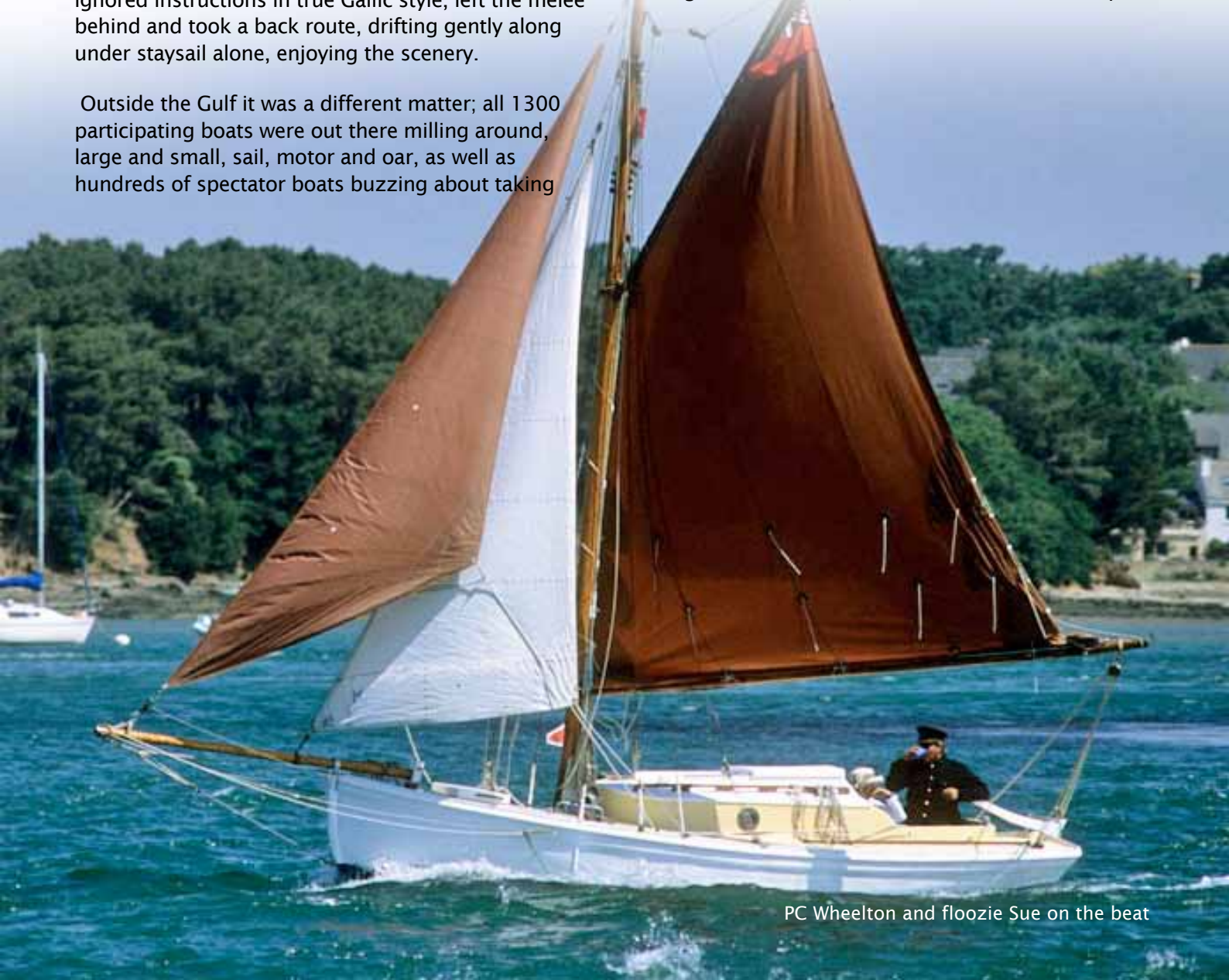
Outside the Gulf it was a different matter; all 1300 participating boats were out there milling around, large and small, sail, motor and oar, as well as hundreds of spectator boats buzzing about taking

photos and getting in the way so it was quite nerve-wracking. For the Grand Parade we were supposed to find the other working boats in the crowd, form up in line in the correct part of the parade and enter the Gulf slowly under sail. We had the tide under us, it was a beat and it was mayhem. At times it involved surfing along on a tide which can reach nine knots in the narrows and it seemed very similar to white water rafting.

Did I mention that we were dressed up? Well, it's time to confess that we were in period costume; Howard as the Edwardian Police Sergeant and me as his floozie crew in bloomers and silly hat. For this we received lots of smiling thumbs-ups from participants as well as spectators.

Literally thousands of people on the shore had an amazing spectacle, as did we, but to be in the thick of it was not all fun.

I wish I could say that *Victoria* survived unscathed, but sadly she did not. Just as we thought we were through the worst of it, the narrowest and fastest part



PC Wheelton and floozie Sue on the beat

behind us, a local gaffer on port tack failed to avoid us. A frightening moment and a hideous sound of splintering wood as Victoria's boom took the force of the other boat's bowsprit and broke clean in two. When things calmed down and we took stock of the damage, we could see that we had in fact escaped fairly lightly. No holes in the boat, no ingress of water, just the broken spar and a chunk of toe rail missing.

We retired from the parade and, being temporarily engine-less, accepted a tow back towards Vannes the quiet way. A very big thank you to the whaler from the West Country which rescued us. There was yet another jolly crew dinner ashore at Port Anna where we drowned our sorrows, recovered our cool and said our goodbyes to new friends made this week. In the morning Howard bullied the engine back to life and we motored up to Vannes to sort out repairs.

Monday morning found us with our photo in the West France regional paper, taken pre-collision so we are in costume and smiling. We stay on a further week to be joined by various family and friends. Howard rigs the mainsail, reefed, and we manage to sail a bit without the boom but we don't like it: Victoria was not built for a bawley rig.

In comparison to what has gone before, the return home is uneventful. It's a different crane driver and he takes great care lifting Victoria onto the lorry, we call in on the aforementioned local gaffer to pick up the wood he's bought us for a new boom, and the rest is plain sailing...and the coffee on the ferry is still awful.

Sue Lewis



Piloting Victoria through Honfleur

Forthcoming Events

There will be only two major events left in the ECOGA calendar by the time you read this – the August Classics Cruise from the 20-28th and the Maldon Town Regatta on September 17th.

You had full details of the August Cruise in the last Eastcoaster, with an entry form which I hope you sent off weeks ago; suffice to say it starts with a regatta at Ipswich Haven Port marina on Sunday 21st August. This year the opening weekend coincides with the Ipswich Maritime Festival, so drive round for the spectacle, if you can't sail.

The Maldon Town Regatta programme and entry form can be obtained from the Regatta Association, tel 01621 853435 and remember we will be celebrating the anniversary of the formation in 1963 of the East coast area OGA at the Maldon Little Ship Club, as part of this event.

BP

Backstay

Buoyage

Let's talk about buoys; (no, bUoys – I don't want to end up on some official register). There are major and minor changes to the Crouch buoyage; the major as a result of increased commercial traffic, bringing spoil from the London Crossrail project. The buoyage is much more comprehensive than previously and all buoys are now lit – but there is a lot more traffic, day and night.

The minor change is of concern only to those brave yachtsmen who use the Rays'n channel to avoid the long slog to the Spitway; an amateur survey in July this year has confirmed that the best water through the Rays'n is east of the yellow Ray Sand buoy, and the recommended route out of the Crouch is to continue eastwards beyond the yellow buoy before turning due north up the 00deg 59.70min E longitude. But it still dries 1m at LWS, so pick your time carefully.

Finally, and of interest only to visitors to Bradwell, the green withies and red buoys marking the entrance to Bradwell creek have been repositioned, but a survey last month showed the best water is still to be found east, ie. the 'wrong' side, of the red buoys on about the 00deg 53.27min E longitude.

All this useful information is to be found on Roger Gaspar's website www.crossingthethamesestuary.com and I am indebted to him for the use of the data.
BP

The next issue of Eastcoaster is due out in mid-November 2011, so submissions by mid-October please, to the editor at the snail or e-mail addresses below.

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Finally, could I remind members who may have changed address to tell the membership sec, Mike Robertson, tel.01473 327115. On the other hand, if you have told us of your move but are still not getting the newsletter, let me know. Thank you.

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