



EASTCOASTER

The Newsletter of the East Coast Old Gaffers Association

May 2020 Issue 123

Forestay

Normally at this time Eastcoaster would be looking forward to the sailing season but the corona virus lockdown has led to the cancellation of practically all this years' events. While it is possible that the Aldeburgh/Slaughdon rally may go ahead everything earlier has been postponed until 2021.

Robinetta is still secure in her mud berth. Due to a combination of bad weather and mechanical breakdown it was impossible to get her out until the middle of March, and with the lockdown we decided to leave her there rather than bringing her ashore to dry out. This probably means no sailing in her for us this season, as once she does come out it will take time to replace her rudder and fettle the pintles. I look at the bright breezy weather we have had since lockdown, and resent its sailing perfection.

So what do I have for you to read about in this Issue? Just a couple of reports of the winter season events? No, the East Coast community have pulled together to create a newsletter worthy of the name.

There may have been no sailing since the last issue, but despite that there is a log to read. A fantasy log, of a cruise in the future, but dreaming and planning is something that every sailor does.

We have reports of 3 "home built" boats, two OGA dinghies under construction, and one radical bulb keel design. Bulb keel? For a Gaffer? Yes, even back in 1900 such boats were being home built. *Kelpie II* has stood the test of time, and now has a write up worthy of her.

Stay safe, enjoy your dreams of sailing. *Alison Cable*



Suffolk Dinghy thwart ©

Pete Thomas

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Message from the President

Words and photos by Robert Hill



Our lucky president is in lockdown in the cottage at the rainbow's end

After a particularly miserable, wet winter I'm sure most of us were looking forward eagerly to sunny summer days on the water. Instead the sunny days have arrived, but many of our boats remain in lockdown still awaiting their annual maintenance. Sailing clubs, boatyards and chandlers are closed and many events scheduled for this summer have already been cancelled or postponed.

At the last East Coast committee meeting, held on line, we considered the position of our plans for the forthcoming season and it is with a heavy heart that I have to inform you that we unanimously took the decision to cancel all events on our programme prior to our planned visit to Aldeburgh at August bank holiday weekend. This, and later events, will be kept under review for the time being until we know better how the coronavirus situation is evolving.

There are events in which we participate, which are not directly organised by the OGA. Some of these have already been cancelled & I would advise monitoring the appropriate websites for updates if you hope to attend. Many of our gatherings also depend on the generosity of clubs & marinas who kindly host us, so we must remain mindful of their positions, as they may remain closed for some time or very restricted in their activities. While on the

face of it being out on the water on a sailing boat may seem an excellent way to remain isolated, unfortunately measures such as social distancing(eg from crew not from your household), thorough hand washing etc are not easy to achieve on a small boat, nor are the rescue services very happy if we call on them! Harwich Port Authority have issued the instruction for leisure craft to “please keep off the waters of Harwich Harbour and the rivers Stour and Orwell until further notice.”

There is good news as well. We are Gaffers, and we are quite used to occasional adversity in the pursuit of our chosen leisure activities. Changing our plans at the last minute is quite usual. Without some uncertainty and challenges life could become rather dull! As Chichester said of his solo circumnavigation, “it intensifies life”. We can continue to look forward to the time we can be afloat again and I’m sure when it comes it will be all the more special. Meanwhile let’s enjoy reading Eastcoaster, Gaffers Log, keeping in touch with fellow Gaffers on social media and if you get really desperate there is always gardening!

Stay safe & well for now and I hope to see you on the water before too long.



view from the President's garden in Scotland

LUNCH AT COLNE YC.

John O'Donnell

It was windy on Sunday on 23 Feb with the water just managing to stop before the cars on the quay, but 18 members including the Area President and secretary sat down to enjoy an excellent roast dinner (beef or turkey) and lots of gravy to pour over perfect roasties. The cauliflower cheese was particularly welcome to me as it was to Yvonne Mitchel as not only do we both relish its delights but hot cheese takes ages to cool enough to eat. It is not that the service was slow or the clubhouse cold but just that by the time we got everything on the table it was, as Goldilocks might say, 'just right'.

With the OGA secretary Colin, and me as Log editor there, we had plenty of chat about the forthcoming Dinghy Show and the OGA dinghy project. Jenny and I had sat next to Yvonne at our first EC lunch at Walton and Frinton YC shortly after our move to Essex and it was lovely to discuss her Eric Berquist Winkle Brig as we had owned one, trailing it annually for marvelous holidays moored in Restronquet Creek, Falmouth.

The view from the dining room was as spectacular as it had been from The Royal Burnham YC the month before and congratulations are due to Lorna for the arrangements. If you have not tried an ECOGA lunch you are missing something. The weather made it no day for boat work, or in my case, an excuse for putting it off. Although I did miss the first half of England's thrashing of the Irish, it was a good compromise as there is always a conflict of who to support.

Bon appetito.

Annual Dinner

Alison Cable

As expected the turn out for the Annual Dinner was lower this year than last. Possibly the number limit made people think they would not be able to get a place? At any event 28 people sat down to dine in fine style at the Walton and Frinton Yacht Club. The absence of the "Crouch Mafia" made for a quieter evening than in previous years, but the company that was there was excellent!

Many thanks to Yvonne Mitchel for organising the dinner.

Essex Dinghy update

Words and pictures Pete "TK" Elliston



The hull is now at readiness to have deck fitted and the centre box. Centre plate has been made and is ready for fibreglassing. Mast and spars done by Rik Graham. Work has stopped as there is currently no urgency for its completion.



Focus has shifted to the back garden where the shed was relocated, gates made wider, rockery removed and paving laid, all to get *Papa Little* in the back garden. She fits also in the workshop where I have two electric hoists to lift her off the trolley!!

Suffolk dinghy update

Pete Thomas

The “Suffolk” OGA Dinghy is making great progress. It has been really good to see members come along and help out with all aspects of the building. Thanks must go to Rod Daniels, John Warren, Robert and Lorna Hill and Yvonne who have come to help during the day and in the evenings.

Over the past week the decks have been fitted along with the centreboard case. The gunwales knees and breast hook have been fitted. There is still a lot to do, floor battens, rudder blade and stock, centreplate not forgetting the spars which are roughed out.



There is a lot of preparation for finishing the inside of the boat, lots and lots of sanding and tidying up the edges. Then turn over and prepare the outside for painting.

Provided we can keep up this pace we should have the boat ready in May/ June.

March 15th , floor slats glued in and the whole boat sanded inside ready for the “Flow coat”. That was applied on 20th March. Its quite amazing how the boat changes so quickly. Sadly with the Covid 19 virus spreading and

social distancing being important group work has had to stop. Clare, Will, and I turned the boat over ready to prepare the outside. A little more sanding and filling to fair up the odd imperfections and then a two pack primer undercoat was applied with a roller. It just needs the top coat now. It seems that blue seems to be a popular colour. No name yet?

The spars are shaped up and varnished waiting for the fittings. The sails have been ordered from Jeckells and we are waiting to hear when they may be ready for collection / delivery.



The progress on the OGA dinghies is semi stalled due to lockdown, but we are looking for the best way to use them in the future. Any suggestions as to where they should be kept, and the best way to make them available for use by the East Coast membership would be greatly appreciated. We hope that they can be booked by members who only have “big” boats, so they can join in the small boat events, but need to develop a fair system so they are available to everyone. We need to have a maintenance schedule, and would expect that people who use the dinghies would help with their upkeep. We would love it if they could be kept in places where young people could have access to them to learn that sailing a gaffer is fun...

All these organisational details will be key to making the best use of the east coast OGA investment in the dinghy initiative.

At some point we hope to have a launch party, but planning events is very difficult this year! Please get in touch with the Eastcoaster editor with your ideas, and she will pass them on to the “dinghy committee” of which she is a member.

The short long history of *Kelpie II*

by Rik Graham

Imagine you are a young man of somewhat limited means, keen on sailing, and you and your brother want your own boat. Buying a new boat is beyond the means of a working man, even a manager in his father's building business, but if you could build one for yourselves you could manage the material costs. Building boats is not easy in your time, there are no kit boats, no 'build it at home' plans from understanding designers, no reliable marine glues or fillers, ply wood and laminating are far in the future; it is either traditional plank on frame construction or nothing. In 1900 there is very little for the 'home' boatbuilder because there are so very few of you. There are boatyards down on the Thames that may offer advice and you have skill as a joiner, but the challenges are great.

A sensible man would gravitate to a simple tried and tested form with easy building techniques, something traditional and known. But a sensible man would have dismissed the idea as too much to take on from the start.



Kelpie II half model

photo © Rik Graham

Defying logic, Herbert Kennard (with the assistance of his brother Albert), decided to build a radical plate and bulb keel, light weight, 'canoe yacht', designed by a London lawyer called J Pain Clark. Pain Clark was a keen sailor and canoeist who thought that canoe design could beneficially influence yacht design. He had a budding reputation for designing speedy boats, and Herbert was a racing man. The boat design was originally drawn for a yacht

called *Rani IV* built in 1901 by the Burnham Yacht Company for a Mr C B Matthews of London. 26ft long, 6ft 6in beam and drawing 3ft 9in, it goes without saying that she was gaff rigged. The design displacement was 4,000lbs of which 2,000lbs was lead for the bulb. Coincidentally, or maybe not, another extant example of Pain Clark's work, *White Moth*, was amateur built by Col Wyckham Martin of furling gear fame.

Even given that they were building the boat themselves this was to be an expensive project. The boat ready for sea cost £82 5s 5d, (£82.27p) when a skilled man earnt 8d (4p) per hour. That is 61 weeks of work, or about £32,000 in today's money. Having nowhere suitable available they also had to erect a shed in which to build her, which they did in their father's works yard in Lewisham.

After a journey down to the river on a wood cart she was launched at Greenwich, probably in Deptford creek, with the river police in attendance. She first took to the water at 14.00 on Saturday 28th June 1902 and was christened *Kelpie II*.

She was then towed to Erith about 15 miles downstream and they picked up a mooring at Erith Yacht Club. They completed fitting out, finishing the details of the rig and provisioning, and next Saturday set off down the Thames and up the East Coast for a holiday cruise. Four people lived on board for 9 days hopping up the coast and getting as far as Pin Mill, a hamlet on the Orwell in Suffolk. Conditions on board must have been a far cry from those expected today. The cabin would just fit three men sleeping abreast with 'the ships boy' in a pipe cot in the very narrow forepeak. For further details her log for this cruise is available on Sailing By. It is evident that they were very happy with the boat and her sailing qualities, delighting in her speed and weatherliness.

She seems to have cruised the coast most summers, apart, of course, from the war years, but Herbert also raced her frequently at club level, at Erith Yacht Club where she had a permanent mooring.

Herbert was a very early member of the club which was founded in 1900. He is reputed to have still been racing there, and winning, in his 80th year. Even in the post war years Herbert sailed in 'proper' rig, duck trousers, pea jacket or blazer, white shirt with club tie and cap. But all things come to an end.

As time passed Herbert sailed less and by the late 1940's David his son was

sailing the boat more than his father. Eventually Herbert passed on his boat to David who carried on the tradition of cruising the Essex rivers and Thames estuary, particularly liking the Ore and Alde. He became commodore of Erith in 1970, a position he held until 1974. David retired from his job as a registrar for London University and bought a house in Pin Mill in 1973. The next year he and his friend Barry Page sailed *Kelpie* to Pin Mill to take up her second permanent mooring. Dave settled himself into the community, where he was already a familiar face, becoming well known and liked. He based the boat there racing, cruising and day sailing. *Kelpie* is still known by the older inhabitants of this little hamlet as Dave Kennard's old boat.

Dave's sailing partner Barry Page was offered a job by an electronics firm in Colchester and moved there from Rochester in 1981 but is still remembered by older members of Erith Yacht Club with affection. He bought *Kelpie* from Dave in April 1988 and took her mooring over. He paid £500 for the boat but, as Dave explained in a letter between them, knowing where she was going was more important to him than the money.

For most of her life *Kelpie* had overwintered either afloat or in saltings but for the past few years had been coming ashore out of season to King's Boatyard. Barry looked after the boat as best he could and had some crucial work done. Her keel plate was doubled at some point and Barry had her decks sheathed in ply and epoxy. One of her garboards was replaced in 1992 and a new mast was built in 1990, but apart from general maintenance and re-fastening those were the only major projects. Although I think it is in some ways regrettable that the decks are sheathed, I would not have bought her if she had needed re-decking.

I used to have a mooring next to *Kelpie* when I kept my previous boat, a Victorian racer, at Pin Mill. I used to row past and think that if I changed to a boat with a lid she would be my ideal.

I approached Barry in the yard one day and asked that if he ever thought of selling *Kelpie* he would talk to me first. He told me that he thought she was getting a bit much to cope with but he would have to check with his family before making a decision. I have since learned that by this time Barry was suffering from the early stages of an undiagnosed illness. I got the impression that he checked my suitability as the next owner of a boat that he loved. I obviously passed muster and a sale was duly arranged. I sold my Orford Whitewing, *Quinque* and took over *Kelpie* in 2004.

It was evident that *Kelpie*, although she was still sailing, had been taken somewhat for granted. I do not think I am being unfair to her previous owners saying that. I know it takes either a lot of money, or skill and time to keep a centenarian going, and given Barry's condition it is not surprising that things had slipped a bit. The problem with the keel would be particularly challenging to anyone but a skilled welder. I have spent the intervening years slowly working through the jobs that needed doing and am now happy that she is strong, sound and good for the future.

No owner has yet sold *Kelpie* in order to move on to another boat; I do not think I will. I would have to find a boat that suits me better first. Four owners, two moorings, 118 years, a short history for such a long time.

P.S.

I would like to add a note of thanks to Gus and Sarah at Kings Boatyard for their forbearance, assistance and advice during the time I have owned *Kelpie*.



Kelpie II in the East Coast Race 2011

photo © Julian Cable

THE COVID 19 CRUISE

by Alastair MacKenzie

Sat June 20th Summer Solstice

Sunday June 21st LW Walton on Naze 0627

HW Southend on Sea 1336

LW Southend on Sea 1857

I seem to need to have a 'reason' to sail, an ambition such as going trawling or a Cruise. Summer 2020: where shall we go? Through the windy winter different opportunities have come and gone. Falmouth Classics and a fortnight exploring the Cornish rivers founders on our deciding to put the house on the market in April. Circumnavigating East Anglia! There's a thought! Open sea northwards and into the Wash, swirling with tides and sediment, sand banks and tricky channels. Then into the Nene to Northampton and on down the canal system to old friend Limehouse Basin. Civilised pub crawling with lots of safe spots to leave the boat for a few days if a house buyer turns up. Charts on the kitchen table, Waterway Guides beside the bed. A week of fair weather to Sutton Bridge on the Nene, eleven long days to London and then back onto salt water for four days, three if I push.

Three to four weeks that can be broken into sections if I need to come home.

Along with an ever more detailed passage plan, *Faith* could be more comfortable and efficient so under the stern-sheets a permanent locker for the stove appears, a bit Heath Robinson but functional. Heaven forbid, but there's a modern stowaway: a movable solar panel to charge the car battery hidden in a plastic box under the thwart. Garmin and DAB radio, a mobile that never runs down and even a laptop.

And then COVID 19 Lock Down.

As the iron grip of lock down tightens it less and less likely that we will get any sailing before the autumn, let alone a circumnavigation. No mid-summer cruise! Fitting out this year was perfunctory and despondent The garden has benefited and it is a real relief to have some fresh vegetables coming in but I cannot feel at peace in the garden the way I do on *Faith*. Some seeds have been as disappointing as usual, but the new-born potatoes and beetroot are fresh and tasty if rather small. Carrots twisted and feeding more carrot flies than can be counted. Brassicas even worse than last year. I lie awake

longing, no, pining for the sea.

The seed, the tiniest spore, of an idea swells and begins to hatch. What if...

Well, what if? If I managed to get away for a few days? I suppose I'd have to take enough food in case I had to self-isolate for two weeks. Could I manage to find enough non-perishables for that? What food? I'd have to eat it raw as I have very little gas left from last year. Where could I go in, say, four days? Drifting in the smoke of another winter pipe dream, hazy from lack of thought. What about starting on a long considered plan to navigate the extent of the East Coast rivers? Where to start such a big project? So many 'whats' and 'wheres' but 'when' at least is sure: mid-summer.

So, what if? What if I start with Vange Creek, circumnavigating Canvey Island? Deep in the dark of the night I slip, eel like, down the Colne. Ebb tide to the Wallet Spitway or even Whitaker then the tide to carry all the way to Benfleet. That's a long haul in a little boat and if the prevailing SW wind blew half would be beating, but what if? Tide tables show that if I left Brightlingsea early on June 21st the ebb would carry me down and the tides would be good and big for getting up Vange, slip sliding and wriggling round the bends. On the other hand, what if I couldn't make it in a tide? Once past the Crouch there's no resting place until Southend, and that is hardly a restful anchorage. Sitting on the sand is quiet but if one is going to get up Vange on the flood tide, sitting on the sand until the tide is half up ...

Waking in the morning we, that is Linda my long suffering non-sailing wife and me, talk it through. Linda has always supported me in my Adventures, to the extent that I worry that she enjoys my absences, and starts helping me work out food lists. "Together we can do this," I say. "So long as we're not together," she responds.

Two weeks later *Faith* is on the trailer, back roads down to Brightlingsea. The single road into the town is my main worry but there are no road blocks. Rather than make her presence obvious I launch her surreptitiously into the mud of the Colne Smack Preservation Society dock, site of the old Aldous boatyard, and park the trailer in a deserted corner of the Council park. It's good to see MN1, also OGA Register 1, *Fairy* further up the dock. What a pretty little smack, sitting where she first touched the water. How sad to have the Dock full of laid-up smacks at mid-summer.

Saturday June 20th 2020

Another anxious drive, 'going to take exercise by rowing alone'. The roads are empty and I see no-one after Weeley Heath. The sky is blue and, miracle of miracles, the wind is in the east, just as it was this day last year. The difference is that this time I want to Go West(ish). Once I've lugged everything on board I move the car into Tower Street, lock up and slip on board and get everything stowed and tidy. The evening is warm, my belly is full of Linda's cooking and I toast the solstice with a wee Bowmore. As *Faith* comes afloat on the rising tide I shift her down onto the pontoon and I slip into my bivvy bag, all ready to get off the pontoon at first light.

Sunday June 21ST 2020

Flat calm at first light of dawn with mist on the water, magical. The moisture is not only in the air; everything is drenched in dew. Breakfast with the 'Foggy, foggy dew' singing in my head. *Faith* is still well afloat but there's no ripple to 'plink, plunk' along her chines. Who would want to sleep on a morning like this?

I scull out to the Dock mooring buoy. Despite the mirror reflections there is wind in the forecast and I tie one reef in. The tide is running hard now, rippling round us, swirling and gurgling under the pontoon, and I have to scull hard to be sure of clearing the yacht club jetty. Pausing to catch my breath (I'm not as young as I used to be) the beauty and the stillness of the creek fills me. At moments like this it's easy to see that everything reflects God's glory.

In the River there is breeze, south of east, and it's a long and short beat down Colne. By Point Clear there is weight in the wind and the reef is a relief. I sit inboard and duck when the occasional wave bursts over the weather bow. Sun glitters in the wind and I can see white water out by Colne Bar. *Faith* sits easy with her sheets loose and I lash the jib tight down and take a half reef, the for'ard four pennants. Less sail and better visibility. If I push too hard we'll take a lot of water over the lee bow.

Past Colne Bar buoy the ebb is racing and the seas steeper, breaking here and there but I have enough power to steer a route through, picking my way with as much care as I would do on a necky bit of glacier, follow this line, then that snow bridge and backtrack along there. And back track it feels like, beating slowly out toward the Spitway. Past the Eagle there was less need to feather the sail and spill wind and a couple of tacks later up went the jib again and *Faith* began to thrash her way to windward, spray dazzling in the sun.

Dead low water springs and white water breaking on the dark humps of the Buxey to the south are a stark reminder of the dangers of this coast. The Garmin claimed that we'd covered nearly twelve miles by the Wallet Spitway, only seven and a half in motor boat, and nearly three hours gone. Never mind, I'd been early away and the sailing was champagne, Spitway buoy in sight and the Wallet Spitway bell, that can be so melancholy a joyous peal, the seas less and more than five knots over the ground. Half past six and the tide was slacking, taking a brief breath before pushing the flood all the way to London town. Swirling sediment in the rough tideway giving way to Swin green. Life is good and I nibble a precious biscuit, revelling in the escape from Locked Down land.



Leaving the Spitway bell astern we were full and bye, cutting the corner to the South Whitaker, threading between the Whitaker and No.6. A guilty thought crosses my mind: not only am I playing truant to the Lock Down but I am now eight miles from dry land and my insured limit is only three. Maybe that could be three miles from the sands exposed at the lowest spring tides, I hope. Extraordinary to imagine walking just a few cables from where we are, out of sight of land. No need for the half reef now and *Faith* is surging fast across the waves. The Thames tide is a conveyor belt and we're romping at well over six knots. Here we are, crossing the mouth of the sailing Mecca, Burnham on Crouch, on a Sunday morning and not a sail in sight although, to be fair, it is a bit early for most folk. That's COVID for you. Just how much will ever come back to 'normal'?

Not long after eight o'clock, South Whitaker abeam, the warm wind is easing and I shake out the reef and race along on a broad reach. High above a thin layer of cirrus is moving in from ahead: harbinger of a change in weather?

Now I'm ticking buoys off, thirty-five minutes to the NE Maplin, twenty to Maplin Edge and on, ever onwards. Far away across the Maplin sands I can hardly see the thin line that should be the low lying Dengie, soon supplanted

by Foulness Island. I've been at sea for four hours now and my mind wanders away to last year's Adventure when sister Elspeth and I motored across from Queenborough in a flat calm, surprised by the Broomway appearing out of the featureless seascape actually where we sought it. The other seeker, a Marsh Harrier, that met us as went through the Havengore Bridge that was already dropping as we rushed through.

Time for memories, but keep the focus on the unity of boat and helm. The sun is hazy now and the wind dropping, veering slowly. We're slowing down and still have twenty miles to go. Tethering the tiller with shock-cord I go forward, several trips, to set the asymmetric reacher and drop the jib. That gives us an exciting knott extra. Biscuits, two, and water to celebrate. Time passes in its own concertina way.

A mile ahead I think I can see, coming and going, the next tiny black buoy. This one is a milestone, Blacktail Spit. This marks the formal end of the West Swin and we are in the Thames proper, our track curving further and further west. It's been South-West since the Maplin, another clanging bell and from here on it clicks on round, South-West by West, West-South-West. In a small boat compass points are easier to see than tiny numbers. In the Thames and it's only nine o'clock. My back and my hands say it's much later than that. Blow biscuits! Time for some celebratory chocolate.

Slowly letting a three square ration melt, square by square, I savour the luxury and lounge, cushioned, against the transom, legs stretched on the sternsheets. Less need for repeated slapping on of sun cream now the cloud is denser, though still high stratus, and the wind, like our course, is veering point by point, dropping as it does. *Faith* is slowing but the tide isn't and the GPS still shows the speed over the ground as nearly six knots. Ticking more buoys off, South Shoebury, thin grey line of land is closer, Shoeburyness in sight and the course due West. Shoebury, a huge container ship in the Yantlet taking the tide up-river. West Shoebury and Southend's pier is in sight.

By West Shoebury we are taking the slip-road off the mighty Thames and looking for the shallow creeks of Leigh. Without an indicator to show our intentions we quietly turn northwards, passing the pier just after eleven. The urban development of Southend on Sea seems to go on for ever, uninterrupted from Shoeburyness to Leigh.

The pier is a good marker for the opening of the Ray Gut and we follow the buoys along, almost parallel to the shore but slowly closing. We must be very

visible from the shore and I'm not at all sure that I should be here. Use the outboard? That's noisy but less ostentatious than tan sails with *Faith* written across it in big letters. Empty mooring buoys show that we are In Hadleigh Ray. Neither side of the creek looks far away and I feel very exposed. Luffing into the tide I pick up a buoy. The mast needs to come down to go under Benfleet bridge so I may as well do it now. There's less than an hour of tide to run and no time to lose. Sails down, mast down onto its crutch and outboard onto the bracket on the transom. Slip the mooring and away in less than ten hurried minutes. Keeping close to the north side of the creek in the deep water I enjoy the green rurality of the northward view, a stark contrast to the densely packed housing of Canvey island nestling under its tall chimneys. After the streets is a golf course, empty. It looks tidy so I assume that it is still being manicured even if there is no play. Suddenly the saltings have narrowed down to a river and the Benfleet Sailing Club goes sailing past. The red brick bridge looks low and I knock the mast crutch out, trying to catch the mast to soften its fall, and duck. There is room enough, but not much to spare. The second bridge is no higher... but no lower. Despite throttling back it all seems very fast.

From here on the channel is more suited to wriggly eels than boats but it is a big tide and plenty of water if we hold the middle of the creek. Another bridge appears round the corner, the A130, not a vehicle in sight. The creek winds and wiggles through the low land. A Marsh Harrier, no, look at the wings, it's a buzzard, quarters the ground. The creek is much wider but the chart tells me that that is an optical illusion, the saltings are covered by the tide. There are few pointers to where the deeper water is but we get through without fouling the prop and there is the last bridge of what is now East Haven Creek. A concrete monstrosity but I suppose it serves its purpose. I lift my hand to touch its underbelly as we slither through and out into Holehaven Creek.

We swing round to starboard, holding close to the shore to avoid the nameless island in the creek. Ahead there's a small quay. I hadn't expected this. From the look of it there must be gravel pits behind it, rather like the Prior's up at Wivenhoe. I had thought the East Haven Creek bridge a monstrosity but it was as nothing compared to the high dull grey tidal barrage looming over the saltings in front of us. Swinging left and right again we come to it. Happily it is open despite the spring tide and through we go. It is all very flat here, even the trees seem stunted and low. The only verticals are the electricity pylons, counter marching in some complex pattern across the fen like flats.

Across the creek from the Veolia waste site Fobbing Creek opens out, enticing but not today, then Parting Gut. Fine names for muddy cul-de-sacs. "Here there be moorings", a few small motor boats afloat but the rest still sitting dejected and unvisited in a small boatyard. I like the look of Timberman's Creek but hold on up the Vange: that after all is the target. Narrower and skinnier the creek winds through the featureless levels. The starboard side is RSPB land and there are frequent hides, some fresh and angular and others worn and hunched against the southwesterlies Excitement is seeing a barn, a lorry park, full. A small creek leads up to it and I wonder whether it started life as a bargeman's quay.

All too soon I have to start worrying about turning, especially as the tide is beginning to slide away down stream so, ambition achieved, spin her on the outboard and head back. This time I can turn up into Timberrmans Creek, nestle alongside the cant edge and wait for this fine vessel to gently sit down on the mud, out of sight and hopefully out of mind for Authority. The Garmin tells me that we have covered forty seven miles, all before lunch. Well, before a late lunch. Average speed over the ground of just less than five knots. Now, that's what a good getaway vehicle should be able to do.



Faith at rest

photo © Alasdair McKenzie

As the tide runs away I get the mast up ready for the tent and spread it along the boom. There's no need to do more just now. A beer, squirreled away weeks ago, a sandwich and time to pray and drowse in the solitude.

Death notices

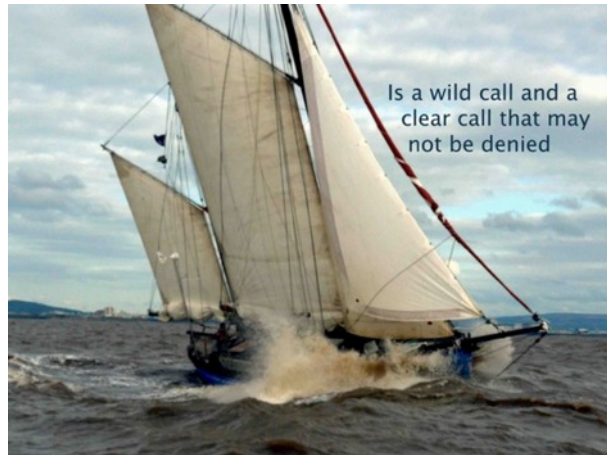
Just a couple of notifications, neither are due to Covid 19 as far as is known.

Graham Brewster (ex *Pembeth* and restorer of *Zulu Kate*) passed away in his sleep on 20th March. He had been in poor health for several years, so his demise wasn't altogether unexpected.

You may not have heard that Euan Seel, founder of Demon Yachts, now partnered with Matt of Aldeburgh Boatyard, died suddenly in mid April. He worked out of the barns at Erwarton next to Nigel Waller.

Backstay

With so much uncertainty about what will happen this year it is hard to feel positive. I need to feel the sea breeze!



words, John Masefield, photos Viv Head, thanks to John O'Donnell for sending it

Thanks to everyone who provided content for this Eastcoaster, I could not produce the newsletter without you. Please continue to contribute! You can submit electronically to alison.margaret.cable@gmail.com, or through the post to Alison Cable, 146 Stortford Hall Park, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 5AP.

Please let me know if you have any comments (or corrections) on the content of this issue. The deadline for next issue is Monday 20th July for inclusion in the August Eastcoaster. Every gaffer has a unique story to tell, and with no sailing on the horizon I really need stories from past seasons, tales of maintenance successes and woes, and pictures to lift the spirits!

Alison Cable. Editor, Eastcoaster

For Sale

Price £9,000 negotiable to a good home.

Fionn is a fine seagoing yacht has been well built in Australia to Laurent Giles' Vertue design, and fitted out as a well balanced gaff cutter. She has sailed East Coast Australian waters before being shipped to the UK.

Sails are of good quality tan and white Dacron, with a full suite of 2 mainsails, 2 jibs, a staysail, and a topsail, plus an additional Genoa and spinnaker.



Ground tackle includes a manual gypsy winch, 35lb CQR, and 27lb Danforth anchors plus 25 fathoms of 5/16th chain.

In recent years *Fionn* has been re-splined, and her running and standing rigging renewed. Her bowsprit has been made retractable.

Professionally fitted electronics include an echo pilot forward looking sonar, marine radio and Weems and Plath instrumentation (inc. chronometer and barometer). Electric bilge pump and solar panel.

A new marine head, paraffin double burner stove and separate protected heater are fitted.

Both bunks are fitted with lee clothes and there is space for a pipe cot.

9'6 good quality WalkerBay sailing dinghy, with oars, is included in sale.

Currently laying at the Marine Store yard, Maldon

contact Steve Wood 01473 231686, mobile 07847688718