



UP THE CREEK



Lower Halstow Yacht Club

Late Summer 2017

Commodores' Ramblings.

Where has the summer gone? I hope you have managed more time afloat than I have. The season started well for me with a trip up as far as Harwich within a week of launching in April. I took Jeddo, Along with Ken in Lethera, to provide a bit of moral support to John and Georgie, the new owners of Skerry of Arne, on the first part of their delivery trip to Norfolk. After a 04.30 windless start on Easter Sunday, we had a cracking sail from just off Sheerness all the way up past the Gunfleet wind farm. The last few miles into Harwich the wind was on the nose so on went the engines, arriving in Harwich about 14.00. Unfortunately we couldn't get in to Halfpenny Pier so back tracked a little to the Walton Backwaters and picked up a spare mooring just inside Stone Point. With a bad forecast of strong winds, the day after next, Ken and I decided it unwise to head further North. Skerry of Arne was able to take refuge in Lowestoft for a few days being fairly close to their home, so silently slipped their mooring something like 03.00 and headed North. We had a much more leisurely departure and headed for Bradwell Marina. The next morning the forecast F6-7 hadn't appeared, so we decided to head for home. The strong wind arrived just as we were departing which made getting away from the berth interesting and then turning the boat around while the wind was trying to push me on to a shiny varnished wooden boat, to exit the Marina. After an hour or so the wind eased and we had a pleasant but cold trip down the Essex Coast with a Northerly breeze pushing us home.

After that, personal commitments and bad weather have restricted my sailing.

Most of you were aware of the problems that developed with the old tractor just before the Spring lift in. In an attempt to improve the bad starting we ended up with a tractor that would not start at all. We ended up in a huge quandary. We had already spent quite a lot of money in the attempts to repair it. Should we continue to spend more money, or should we give up and find a replacement? The committee was quite split with how to proceed. There were two points of view. One being that it was a timing issue and could be fixed and the other that it was a compression issue and terminal. John Knight found a local tractor and driver to step in and assist with lift in. The tractor wasn't man enough for the larger boats and member Bob Foulds stepped in with his Landrover to act a brake wagon. All boats went in on schedule. A great achievement by John and all involved.

After a bit of searching we found a replacement from a dealer near Paddock Wood that took the old non-running tractor in part exchange. The new tractor is quite a bit smaller than the old, but a lot more modern and it's 4 wheel drive will make up for the lower weight. We have now used it to pull out and re-launch a heavier boat and it coped well. We just need to get the

regular drivers up to speed with its 32 forward gears and 16 in reverse!! In reality we will probably only use 2 or 3. We have already trained up some additional drivers to spread the



load. If you fancy having a go at driving the tractor for boat launching and recovery talk to me or John Knight. After demolishing the old green hut and building the footings for the new container. It was planned that a local contractor would lift the container into place. Unfortunately we were still waiting, so we came up with a plan to move and position it ourselves. Using the lift cradle to move the container and then a series of sleepers scaffold boards and rollers, Mike Griffin, Steve Simmons, John Knight and myself, winched the

container into position with a final tug and then a shove with the tractor. We can now start the tidy up of the club hut and conversion of the old Bosuns Store Container.

I know Ken Milburn wants to put the experience to rest, but many of you will probably have seen the BBC2 series, Saving Lives at Sea where Ken was rescued from the creek by Sheerness ILB. Please bear in mind if Ken hadn't been wearing his Lifejacket, he probably wouldn't be with us now. Our trips to and from our boats are the most dangerous part of our hobby, and still many members choose not to wear Lifejackets. Please consider what would happen if you fell in the water.

Hopefully the remaining part of the season will give us some good weather to get out on our boats before we are bringing them ashore for the winter.

On that note, if you wish to come ashore for the winter, don't forget to get your forms to John Knight to enable planning of lift out and storage.

Hopefully we will have a good few more weeks of good boating weather to get out on the water before winter arrives.

Dave Metcalfe

Commodore

Rudderless Meanderings from the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue and I do hope you have all been having a jolly time on the water.

A big thank you for all the articles and pictures you have sent in. Do keep them coming-I've rather too many pictures to include this time but I will try to get in as many as possible in the forthcoming missives, but could I ask for word documents instead of PDFs? I have to re-type these and much as I love you all and its rather tiresome. Naturally if a reader doesn't have access to- or simply will have no truck with- a computer I'll willingly re-type hard copy. No dictation over the `phone though.....

Best trip for me so far this year was to take part in the Swale Barge Match- a glorious event organised by Kentish Sail; I felt honoured to be allowed to join in.

The boats were beautiful and naturally fiercely competitive. I noticed at least one Smack was engineless and manoeuvred out onto the course by the team RIB pushing against her transom- some weight advantage maybe for a true thoroughbred.



I was surprised to see that the Smack boys of 100 years or so ago used carbon spinnaker poles and asymmetric `shutes but there you are.....A Formula One Smack about to overhaul us on the downwind leg large style.....I fear we were not competitive.

My project for the day was firstly just getting round the course and not making a twit of myself – which I almost achieved – but not quite, see below- and secondly not hitting anybody, which I didn't thankfully. Thanks very much to Kentish Sail who organised A Grand Day Out.

As mentioned the day was marred by a few stupid mistakes by the skipper-your editor. Chief among them was missing the pre-match briefing for reasons too complicated to mention but not without some modicum of ineptitude on his part. Next was crossing the finish line the wrong side of the committee boat thus getting him silly self disqualified, not that we were ever going to trouble the judges of course. Lastly missing the awards ceremony due to the crew chatting up the cab driver- long story. We hope to do better next year.

I came across an interesting picture of our very own Stangate Creek recently painted by one time local boy JMW Turner.

Fab signature sunset as usual and in the foreground the creek looks busy. Maybe a club Top of the Tide Race, in far from ideal conditions however, two chaps have started rowing. They'll get disqualified for that!

I understand that this painting is in storage at the Tate. Surely, if they're not using it at the mo, the committee could ask if we could borrow it to stick it up in the new club hut. Worth an email I'd say Dave.

Must have been painted around the time HMS Nimble – a ten gun cutter- ran aground in Stangate Creek and was sold for £2. Those were the days.....



Stangate Creek

Joseph Mallord William Turner

1824-1823

I see that the email for lift in dates has arrived so we can look forward to a winter ashore attempting to re-establish order out of the season's chaos

Readers may be aware of the Peter Principle whereby employees are promoted to just above their level of competence and then presumably fired for incompetence. When I think of the layup and all the work on my to-do list I'm reminded of the suggestion I read once that the same principle could be applied to yacht ownership. In some way do we tend to buy a boat in size and complexity just one step above what we can reasonably manage and perhaps afford? I'm sure my 28 footer takes twice as long to anti-foul as by old 22 foot boat and everything costs at least twice as much. Life would be a deal simpler and perhaps as much fun if one owned a single seat canoe with enough space for a few beers and a sandwich, but there again maybe not.



John Williams Editor

Message from the Mooring Master

Only a short contribution but can I mention that I am disappointed that around only half of those with moorings have advised me of the condition of their moorings. It is assumed that all moorings will have been checked by now. Once again information required is:

Approximate date of check, how far down was checked and percentage wear on components.

Graham Leighton



Cruising on the Thames

I have been a yachtsman now for about 20 years but I started boating 10 years before that on the Upper Thames.



I had only been on a boat once in my life when my brother in law took me out on his tiny little fishing boat to the Montgomery and back. The weather was wild and

the waves were big but I survived it and lived to tell the tale to my surprise.

Years later we bought Gefion a Colvic 27 foot cabin cruiser with a lovely aft cabin moored at John Fenn's yard at Maidenhead and with the usual 10 minutes instruction from the salesman the deal was done.

My wife Carol and the kids and I all got excited about our new purchase and the adventures we would have. The first one came a bit too early as we motored the few hundred metres to Bolters Lock. The gates were closed and Carol told me to slow down. That was when I realised I was not at all sure how to do that! The lesson on going astern seemed to slip my mind however we managed it without too much of a disaster but it was a lesson learnt.

Those of you familiar with Bolters Lock may remember that is very large and during the summer is a popular place with tourists to sit and watch the boats come in and out. A bit like the Coliseum in Rome! They cram in as many boats as they can of all shapes and sizes so it is not uncommon to have a 40 footer next to a 15 footer or even a canoe. It is a deep lock too and holds about one million gallons of water I was told so it takes a while to fill. There are a few bumps occur too as you can imagine but the secret of boating on non tidal and Lock infested rivers is to give up all hope that your boat will stay shiny and new for very long and get on with enjoying it as it is very pleasant to sail slowly and take in the amazing houses to be seen along the way.

The non tidal Thames is an amazing river and the section from Windsor to Henley is in my opinion the `Jewel in the Crown`. In the school holidays I would take the boat up to Henley and moor her there for two weeks. Whilst I was at work Carol and the kids would just use it as a holiday home and invite her friend Kay up with her kids and they would have a great time .The pubs along the riverside are wonderful too.

We even got as far as Abingdon one year. Do not be fooled by looking on the Thames chart as regards the time it takes to get anywhere. The river twists and turns and the only way to work our times is to add up the distance between the locks and divide it by your speed (5kts probably) then add 30 to 60 minutes for each lock/in /out. It can be a long day and a tiring one if it is hot so it does not do to be too adventurous.

We later bought a Golden Bear a Fairline 27 with twin 150hp engines and she took us from Maidenhead to Ramsgate twice. Once with Motor Boats Monthly and later by ourselves.

Having said all that they were some of the best times on the water we ever had and I can recommend it to all so if you have a shallow draft boat get the mast off and commit a fortnight to a different sort of sailing. The trip through Central London on the tidal Thames is amazing and after Teddington you are in a different world. Check the Internet for maps of the toe paths and locks and you will be well armed.

You will not regret it

Alan Douglas

“ I’m sure they’re my boots you got on there.....”



Three go to Boulogne

Sounded a good idea- “lets go across the other side”.

So three intrepid yachties on one boat set sail for the first leg. Lower Halstow to Ramsgate.

Just a standard run, five yards from the scrubdown pad we run aground on a grassy mud mound. Plenty of high revs backwards and forwards freed us. Apparently no run aground but polishing keels?.

Then off to Margate, running across a submerged fisherman’s net. It had very small floats, but the weight of the net dragged under the floats. Trying to reverse out of the sudden stop aggravated the problem and the engine had to be shut down. Some knife work on either side of the stern released us. Fisherman no amused. A soldier`s wind saw us o Ramsgate about three hours later. A knife, sharpened by the skipper, was given to the diver who promptly cut himself.

After five dives with the knife strapped to the wrist the prop was freed.

The diver took no pleasure in being sponged down with hot water to restore warmth, by the skipper!

Ramsgate to Gravelines. Standard run . Gull buoy , South Falls, Sandette Light Vessel, Ruytingen W, across the Dunkerque approach, into the Gravelines channel.

Too easy! Our pipe smoking skipper , whose pipe goes out every 4 minutes, had previously laid a trail of spent matches across the channel. You could almost walk it!

A whole day in Gravelines saw the trio walk down one side Gravelines channel to the very end at low water, and saw the best way to enter the channel. The way back to the free ferry was interrupted by a favourite bar. Met a Dutch couple, also in a yacht, and have been invited to their drying out club at Paal some 27nm up river from Breskens.

Free ferry and a bar came into view. Walk back to the town square for a drink before dining out in the Marina bar.

Next day wind going south so off to Boulogne.

Gravelines to Boulogne, beautiful day, sun and a good wind. Once past the Calais approach just gentle sailing. Going past Cape Blanc and Cape Griz Nez, down past the villages towards Boulogne, I saw all the German bunkers and pill boxes now tumbling into the sea. I reflected that the same is along the Dover coast. Ours to keep the German out (worked) Theirs to keep the British out (didn't work). (vor sprung technik?- I don't think so)

Inside Boulogne breakwater, keeping alongside it until painted white marks then turn to port. Steady stream of boats going in. Directed by a young lady on the outer pontoon, we found a berth. Soon filled up. Wash and brush up, then a walk round town. Found a bar for a drink. The bar had dozens of French dried sausages hanging, the idea is you bought one and it is put in a glass for "nibbles".

Lazy start next day for a walk up to the old town walls. One of us complained that some of it was uphill !? Statues abound all around the old town walls. Found a bar for a few drinks.

Mooching about the streets of Boulogne proper, we came across an antique arcade, the lady speaking very good English heard our desire for a meal of "fruits de la mer", recommended "Chez Jules" and even booked a table for "trois anglais"

Giant plate of crushed ice with oysters, whelks, winkles, prawns, shrimps and langoustines, bread and dips and sauces. Fantastic.

3AM having barely made the marina loos 33 euros worth of not so wonderful seafood disappeared .

Where shall we go today? North wind, back to Gravelines.

Boulogne to Gravelines. Another good run. Had to go very slow to arrive at Gravelines inside the two hour slot before going into the approach. Wind got stronger, we got faster. Kept reducing sail to go slower.

Booked into Gravelines Marina led to some confusion as the elderly , non-English speaking gentleman, didn't realise we had left for a few days and tried to charge us an extra three days.

Caught bus to Dunkerque. The only poor day. wind and rain. Walked round shops, found favourite bar, then down to the Marina and the boat basins , a few historic ships but not much time to visit. Bus back to Gravelines for evening meal.

Gravelines to Lower Halstow . 74 nm . A good run. Had to weave through some big stuff at the separation zones but all OK. Wet round Margate sands via Queen`s Channel (didn't want to run into irate fisherman)

Arrived Lower Halstow at Midnight , 14Hrs About 5kn average.

If you can (anyone) join us.

Mick the Gruff

(Not sure a “drying out club” sounds much fun Mick– you were wise to give it a miss-Ed)

Manningtree- Up the Creek!

I decided I would like to learn to sail, or at least to own a boat. Enquires brought to my doorstep a “friend of a friend” who had a dinghy for sale. “Would it be suitable for a beginner?”. “Ideal” was the answer. “Come for a trial sail”.

So we arrived at a reservoir on the outskirts of London and on a windless evening drifted up and down on the calm water.

Back on shore the deal was struck and I became the owner of a Merlin Rocket No. 856, complete with trailer and two suits of sails.

I was now a sailor, but not wishing to appear over confident, I decided that a few lessons might help. Accordingly, I booked six lessons at the Rock Sailing School in Cornwall, where we would be spending our summer holidays.

Having towed the Merlin down to Rock, the following day we presented ourselves for lesson No 1; The other half of “we” was my friend, Alfie, a large jolly, London Policeman who thought sailing might be fun.

I suggested to the instructor that the lessons might take place in my own craft and he agreed that they might, but on learning that the boat was a Merlin Rocket, for some reason changed his mind and directed us to a large Wayfarer, which he said would be more suitable.

So, after six hours of sailing tuition we were let loose in the Merlin to explore the Camel Estuary, having been warned not to go out too far. My crew and I had purchased identical spotty sailing sweaters and blue sailing shoes, so that the whole ensemble looked very nautical. (Wet suits had not yet arrived on the scene). Our first outing was quite successful, not much wind but even so, why did our Merlin heel at the slightest puff? The Wayfarer we had had our lessons in was much more stable!. However, ignorance is bliss and we carried on.

The rest of the two weeks holiday soon passed; we went out sailing every day and were getting used to our boat`s habit of trying to fall over in the water (most disconcerting was the way it heeled from side to side when the wind was behind us).

Back home after the holiday and now considering ourselves experts, a day`s sailing was arranged. It was decided to tow the boat along the Essex coastline until a likely spot to launch was found. This we did and found Manningtree on the River Stour Estuary.

Manningtree had a good ramp for launching and the locals were already sailing. True, most of them were returning to the ramp and the tide appeared to be going out but we could not tow all this way and not sail, could we?

Waving goodbye to our wives, we set sail. A steady offshore breeze had sprung up and we made good progress. After about 10 minutes, it was obvious that the lack of wind would not

be a problem but lack of water would be!. The tide was going out fast and we came to a halt about a mile from our starting point.

Alfie sat in the boat and surveyed the vast expanse of black mud, which now surrounded us. We had a discussion as to who should get out and push. I said it was undoubtedly part of the crew's duty- the crew did not agree. A compromise was reached- we both got out into the smelly black mud, which came halfway up our legs.

Pushing the dingy was hard work. The disturbed mud smelt dreadfully. We tried to follow the small streams, but these were too shallow for progress. Onwards we toiled but the shore seemed just as far away. By this time we were getting tired and my crew had fallen over adding yet more mud to his person. He had also started swearing.

During a stop to regain our breath, we saw some 200 yards away a patch of water which appeared rather deeper than the last few inches we were foundering in. Better still, it continued up the creek to dry land. If we could push the boat up there, we could recover it with the car.

We plodded on and with the prospect of salvation at hand, the swearing had ceased and, as we got nearer to the inlet, the water depth was increasing, allowing the boat to float. Our spirits rose, the little stream was leading inshore, although because of the bends we could not see very far ahead. Still we were making good progress, although the mud smelt worse and had changed texture, It seemed softer and softer underfoot.

We pressed on! Rounding the last bend we saw to our dismay the end of "the little stream" we had followed so hopefully. In front of us was a high concrete wall, topped with iron railings. The 'stream' was coming out from a large concrete pipe set in the wall- in fact a sewage outlet. There was no way we would be able to get the boat over that. Behind me the swearing had started again. We did an about turn and headed back down the gully, rather mindful of what we were wading through.

It was then our salvation appeared in form of a fisherman in a rowing boat, who appeared to have mastered the art of rowing over mud. He offered to tow the Merlin while we floundered about, relieved of the effort of having to push. This worked well- so well in fact that we eventually made it back to our launching trailer and our waiting wives.

Having thanked our rescuer and pressed a packet of damp cigarettes into his hand, only one problem remained. From the waist down we were covered in black mud which did not smell any sweeter as it dried out. It was suggested that the Gents' toilet by the car park might provide washing facilities.

After the top coat had been scraped off with old newspapers from the litter bin, upon arrival at the Gents, we found the only water available was by flushing the toilets! Eventually enough mud was removed and we obtained permission to enter the car and drive home.

A short while later I sold the Rocket and joined a catamaran yacht club! I'm still amazed that we never once capsized her!

John Robertson



Just for the record-here`s a picky of a less proficient sailor than our contributor capsizing a Merlin Rocket-mind you he does seem to have kept his hat on. Ed.

Lost and Found

Hello Sailors!!

Found a pair of jazzy `Y` fronts on the slipway this morning!

Darkish muddy blue/green with fetching gold piping. size extra large, fine quality, possibly Calvin Kline, but there again maybe M & S.

I've popped `em on the slip wall to dry- hopefully they can be re-united with a grateful owner who must be missing `em I'd say.

May I suggest a small donation to a charity of the owner's choice to celebrate getting them back?

Pip Pip!

Capt. Osgood Z`beard RN (retired)

