UP THE CREEK

Lower Halstow Yacht Club

Autumn 2019

Commodores Ramblings

I start this with the sad news of the passing of two members in the past months, most of you know by now that Ray Govier passed away in the spring. Ray had been unwell for some time and had not been an active sailor for a few years but was one of the founder members of our club. Some of the more established club members will remember Ray with his sailors beard and sage advice available on all matters nautical. He was certainly instrumental in my early years in sailing and indeed becoming involved in the club some forty years ago. He will be sorely missed.

Also Dave Clarke, one of our more recent members passed away during the summer our thoughts go to his family.

At this time of year I always think the sailing season has passed in the blink of an eye as it only seems a short while ago that my fresh antifouling touched the water yet quite a few miles have passed under my keel. I managed to organise things so that I could get away for a little longer this year with an east coast trip in the spring and a cruise to Brittany and back during the summer. The furthest I managed was Roscoff using the fine weather to travel and using the low pressure systems to stay in port and explore the local area by bike and bus. One thing that has impressed me this year is the abundance of wild life to see, I have seen many seals from the river Deben to middle of the English Channel and Dolphins from a school of 7 or 8 off of Dungeness to individuals everywhere and even a pair of Dolphins off of Leysdown. I wonder if the many wind farms sprouting up are providing protected breeding grounds for the fish the larger mammals feed on.

We have had a few issues with the clubhouse and outside toilet during the summer being left unlocked, I know that I have mentioned this via email but if you see the club buildings open

with no members in the local vicinity please lock the doors as you leave, we all have keys so there should be no problem if any member needs to use the facilities. Whilst I am in the moan section I need to mention Mooring checks. Every member is required to inspect and report the condition of their mooring every year, replacing the tackle as necessary. The reporting form is on our website and is straightforward to complete. To date the mooring master is waiting for about a third of our members reports.

Recently we had a boat break away from its mooring and come ashore; luckily very little damage was evident. The picture below is of the mooring that parted, a cursory look makes it obvious that some refurbishment was necessary. Our mooring master Graham Leighton or any of the committee are available for advice or help with mooring checks. The committee is currently looking into ways to ensure that all mooring as inspected every year.

As you know John Knight has stepped down as yardmaster but has stayed on to assist Lawrence Newing who is taking over the job. At present Lawrence is organising the lift out schedule which will be well under way by the time you read this. We are on the lookout for tractor drivers so if you think you could manoeuvre a loaded tractor and trailer please contact a committee member.

My thoughts now are turning toward my lift out and the long list of jobs to do over the winter but also where I might sail to next year.

Graham Osbourne

Rudderless Meanderings from your Editor

I am sure most boaters sometimes feel the pressure from loved ones to sell up and buy something that "we can both enjoy....." This is usually accompanied with a gentle mention of the so and so's opposite who have a lovely caravan..

The very idea of replacing an object of nautical beauty imbued with charm, grace and character with a white box one spends hours of leisure time dragging around the M25 in the teeth of the traffic has never appealed, but she who must be obeyed (SWMBO) has often alluded to this direction of travel for us (!) over the years.

One plan that has been used by some to out flank these ideas is to buy a boat that looks rather like a caravan and hope one can cover two worlds in one. But that just doesn't cover the "pride of ownership" aspect for me.

I understand we are all be in his game for different reasons but for me the old girl just has to look right. It's the only way to forgive her all her foibles after all. Call me old fashioned but that rear three quarter view in the sunset when pulling back to the shore is what it's all about. That one charming view instantly mitigates the hours spent untangling lines and unblocking the heads and we can imagine that all is right in the world. Anyway the caravanish boat would still "wobble and smell" so wouldn't really be accepted by SWMBO anyway.

Earlier in the year another tactic has emerged and it's a winner. Buying a share in a narrow boat.

I have seized upon this option with gusto. She's based near Stratford-Upon-Avon, we have her for 4 weeks a year (still plenty of time to get out on the proper boat!) she is very pretty and even has a log burner and a fridge for the beers. Her name is Whiston and I'm a little bit in love.

One gets to mess around on the water – albeit without the thrills of heeling to a stiff force5 off Sheppy accompanied by a screaming crew but hey- she's a boat none the less and definitely not a feckin caravan!

SWMBO and her new love interest- NB Whiston- not the pint...

Plodding around Burntwick Island recently, my reverie was disturbed by a low throbbing. A powerful RIB crewed by dark clad men of action was but a few yards astern. It was the police no less. Always nervous around law enforcement agencies of any kind – obviously we have all done something wrong recently even though one can't actually put one's finger on it. - I expected to be boarded, searched for guns, beers confiscated etc – but the nice chaps were merely enquiring if I had run aground as I was close in. One thing was for sure, they couldn't have done me for speeding in my jalopy. Maybe caught in possession of an offensive ready meal – fair cop officer.....

Raise a Glass to the Richard Montgomery!

Read an article from the Guardian – regarding questions in the House of Lords no less- on the subject of our local wreck, reminding us of the giant tsunami expected if she goes up one fine day. It occurred to me that rather than thinking of her as a Sword of Damocles hanging by a thread above our cruising area we should perhaps think of her as a blessing.

If it wasn't for all that unexploded ordinance lying about in the estuary we would have Boris and his lovely noisy Island by now.

In fact she is a blessed block to all realistic development in the area and we and the birds can be left in peace.

In addition – one has to admit that it does add a bit of edge to our sailing adventures knowing that we could be blown to smithereens at any moment....

So Raise a Glass I say to the MV Richard Montgomery and all that lies still within her!

Finally, thanks for all the contributions – keep them coming!

Oh and more pictures please or you will have to keep looking at mine.

This is Beryl up the Blackwater this summer.

Your Editor

John Williams

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Going South

Hurst Castle is the guardian of the western entrance to the Solent, built at the end of a long natural shingle bank. Keyhaven is three creeks in the saltings that lie behind that bank. It is a dramatic place. A friend has a new boat there, and this prompted me to take Gloria south this summer.

In a bigger boat one could, of course, make the passage without stopping, but on Gloria I avoid night-sailing if possible, and that means that the voyage is tricky even in favourable winds. Beyond Beachy Head and the Seven Sisters in Sussex there are several deep water ports or marinas (Newhaven, Brighton, Shoreham, Littlehampton) separated by only a few miles but before that it is difficult. There is Eastbourne, just before Beachy Head, where Sovereign Harbour would feel like mooring in a shopping arcade, but even that is 45 miles from Dover or 60 from Ramsgate. The only possible shelter in between is Rye, 20 miles from Dover but only accessible near high water. If you take the southwest-going tide from Dover or Ramsgate you are likely to arrive off Rye near low water.

What actually happened was that on Day 1 we had a NW3 which took us from Lower Halstow to Pegwell Bay where we anchored for the night. On Day 2, winds were light and variable so, after a good deal of motoring, we anchored off the beach at Rye. On the next day, a NE breeze took us to Brighton where we were relieved to have the first good night's sleep. On the fourth day, we got all along the built-up coast and passed Selsey Bill to reach Chichester.

Coming back we were lucky to have three days of blue skies and a steady SW breeze which took us from Keyhaven to Bembridge, Bembridge to Newhaven, and Newhaven to Rye, arriving there at high water. Then it became harder with a calm day in which we motored to Dover, followed a day of brisk NE breeze which required a long beat up to Ramsgate, and then another day with the same wind that carried us back to the Swale.

Was it worth it? Ten days sailing to get there and back. The weather was fair; the winds were mostly favourable, and it was early July so

plenty of daylight. Harbour dues were considerable as every place charged and that is annoying when all you want is a sheltered anchorage (why is not one allowed to anchor in Dover Harbour where there is ample space?). There are plenty of places I would recommend: Chichester,Bembridge, Beaulieu, Keyhaven and no doubt plenty of free anchorages to be found, if one had more time. The Channel itself is dramatic after the east coast, with its cliffs, the deep blue of the water in sunshine, and the gannets. It was a great cruise but we were lucky it did not take longer.

Nick Donaldson

Money Saving Tips!

For anti-slip paint - look at Premier marine paints - including delivery 1 litre @ £22.99 for coverage of 10 sq. m. as opposed to others brands costing well more - sometimes about 4 x more!. Premiermarinepaints.co.uk

I have used this brand for 4-8 yrs find it does job!

Preparation is everything as always.

Also look at MarineStore, North Street, Maildon: Essex (Chandlery@marinestore.co.uk) for good value antifoul.

I use Hempinol Black Bitumen Varnish 4L.- (delivery free if exceeds of £100) - maybe if enough people want, it may prove feasible for someone to order, you can get foc delivery. Cost for a 4L tin for @ £21.99

You can dilute with cheap white spirit, however it is a thin coat hence name suggests "varnish" as opposed to using commercial antifoul which we all know is excessive cost.

4 litre tin does 2 coats on my boat, I add copper powder to 2nd coat ~ 500g stirred into this final coat. I get this from ebay @ ~£13.00 inc delivery.

I find it gives good protection to hull, keels etc.

I find if there are any barnacles or weed at the end of season this falls off readily with a quick pressure wash.

I have used this brand for 5-8 yrs find it does job!

Preparation is everything as always.

Ken - `Lethera`

Dinghy cruise to Faversham

First cruise from LHYC by new member in Mirror Dinghy, "Reflections" 23.3.19 HW Sheerness 01.49hrs, wind SW veering NE

My friend John left me at about 9.30pm; I brought the boat round and parked in front of the clubhouse to begin rigging up. Ken came over to see what was going on, he asked straight away do I have everything I need, to which I replied, I think I do, but he wouldn't have that. He insisted on fetching me his big reserve lamp, probably big enough to sink my boat, unfortunately the battery was flat so he couldn't lend it to me, instead he found two key ring torches which he insisted I have as emergency backup, this made me realise, I should have brought a decent waterproof torch as a backup. Ken helped me to secure my rowlock to the stern, tried to give me all sorts of goodies but I resisted all but a few cable ties and some thin twine.

I tried to go to bed at about 11am but kept remembering things and getting up to put them right, I set my alarm for 1am but got up at 12.30am, nonetheless I think it was 1.30am before I was on the water. Launching at LHYC is a dream, the slip is wider than I am used to, and more solid and there are things to tie up to. It is also a huge blessing not to have a gate to contend with when launching. It was always going to be beyond my wit to switch on the light before raising the gunter, so the final frustration was to do this without tipping the light, and its battery, (that was tied near the top of the yard), in to the soup.

The difficulty I now encountered was navigation, I had spent the week studying charts of the Swale and the Estuary, I had not considered my retreat from Lower Halstow Creek. Although the moon was full, and high in the South, I just didn't have a clear enough image in my mind of the easterly shore which I was to follow, in my effort to avoid The Shade, I ended up crossing the saltings of Greenborough Marsh, I eventually had to pull the boat, and wasn't entirely sure which way to head, I decided on the lights of what I was sure to be Queenborough. I was right, but the challenge was a sort of moat that runs along the side of the salting, I had to swim alongside the boat for a few yards and then clamber over a high mound of mud to finally reach Stangate Creek. The most reassuring thing was the sight of a yacht at anchor, whose light I had seen earlier, but not been able to find. From here it really was plain sailing, the wind, when it blew, was always behind me, the current for now on my side.

The Medway was busy with shipping and surprisingly choppy, the wind threatened to dessert me several times, but as is always the case when sailing with tide, the boat always drifted eventually to another patch of wind. Coming out of the Medway, the estuary was as flat as a millpond, and I had absolutely no fears whatsoever. I immediately saw the first North Cardinal, (quick flashing white), which I recognised by location rather than code, I looked for two more but saw none such. I saw lights nearer in to shore which I took to be Cheyney Rocks, but having no visible buoyage, (nor Compass, Dope), I steered a course roughly halfway between the shipping channel and the Sheppey shore. Thick cloud had gathered by now and I lost the moon, all the marks I hoped to see to seaward were not in evidence. I did see, ghosting by me in the murk, large posts(unlit), that did concern me a little, I presumed they were either a hazard in themselves, or warning me of a hazard, but I kept my distance and came to no harm.

I was visited by either a lifeboat or coast guard boat of some description. At first I puzzled over the appearance of a port channel marker that seemed to be coming toward me, then why it at morphed into a lighthouse and was shining straight at me. It eventually cut its engines and coasted up near me keeping its searchlight on me, I found that ignoring it wouldn't make it go away, but a friendly wave seemed to help and off it went. I will advise the CG of my next nocturnal mission, and hopefully be left alone. [I now think it was a pilot boat, possibly sent by the CG to check me out, he had definitely come out of his way].

As the light of morning arrived at 5am visibility barely improved, the gloomy dark was replaced by a very murky morning, and I still couldn't see the wind farm, or anything more distant than the near shore. I was still some way out but it is hard to resist the temptation to steer toward the shore, I was a breast of Warden Point, and seemed to remain so for many hours, I believe I had fallen victim to the foul tide eddy that runs along that stretch of the cant, and the wind was still not strong. It was very slow going all the way past Leysdown until I finally landed on the Columbine at low water. I waited there for it to cover, and wasted a perfect opportunity for a rest. I should have anchored and slept, but instead I stood in the shallows and held on to the boat, occasionally leaving it to it's devices, I tried to take a picture of it but this freaked out my phone, which then sulked and refused to work for the rest of the trip.

After about forty minutes or so, the Columbine covered, and I was able to sail on, although the wind took a nap. I had a clear picture of Faversham Creek, on the Port side at the first bend of the Swale to Starboard, opposite the shoal where the seals like to be. I feared I wouldn't have enough water to sail the narrow twisty creek, but there was enough water and, at last enough wind, I had a rip roaring sail, I was puzzled that some of the channel markers were down in the water where I was sailing but others were high up on the mud banks to either side.

The final humiliation was arriving in the town, sculling gently with my makeshift rowlock on the transom, worked fine, but I was moving far too fast, I shot past my destination, eventually managed to turn perhaps 100 yds past the slip, but then my makeshift oar crutch made shift as I tried to scull against the strong flood. I had no option but to clamber out into the mud and end the day as it had begun, but I had another surprise in store; at the bottom of the slip, Alan keeps some special mud, for sorting the men from the boys no doubt, I was stuck fast, waist deep, and had left the boat out of reach. Fortunately I had my long painter in my hand, and was able to pull the mirror up over the mud toward me, eventually, with a lot of kicking and thrashing I was free and managed to wriggle over to a ladder and climb up to the jetty. The good respectable folk of Faversham politely ignored the vision of horror which had alighted on their shore.

Stephen

(these Dinghy Crusing Assocation chaps are just too cool. I'm in awe of their hairy chested adventures, put us all to shame- But hey! Where do you store the beer on these tiny craft! Ed)

Club Website

You may have noticed a few changes to the club website recently. I have changed the way a number of documents are displayed. Documents such as Committee Meeting Minutes, and Up the Creek are now saved as Posts rather than Pages that makes them far easier to upload and display. Rather than updating the menus every time a new document is loaded, the documents are now accessed by self-updating lists that link to the document. This saves a huge amount of time.

Many members have favourite products or know of favoured suppliers. It was recently suggested that we had a list on the website. I have now set this up accessed via the Home menu (which is visible to anyone visiting the site). I felt it would be useful if members could add their own recommendations, so there is a link (you need to be logged in) to a simple form to add a Post with the detail of the product. There's only a few there at the moment, so if you have anything to add please add it.

As you know, when you log in, you are taken to a Members Home Page with posts that are only visible to logged in members. For some time there has been a link to add new posts. Unfortunately, no one has used it yet. I have simplified the input form and called it 'General Chat,' If you have anything to say or pictures to share, it's an easy way to share with other members. Whilst on pictures, I have increased the maximum image size to 5MB which should alleviate the need to reduce the size of pictures for all but those who use modern high definition SLR cameras.

You will have noticed that most emails from the club are delivered as an excerpt of the message with a link to the full message on the website. Whilst most, I believe are perfectly readable a few displayed in very small print on a grey background. This was due to a form I had set up to enable non-admin committee members to send emails. Unfortunately, the form used a template that couldn't be adjusted. Hence the small print and grey background.

To fix the email display issue and introduce the other features already mentioned, we have purchased an additional plugin (software) for the site that makes writing posts simple and can be made available to anyone, not just admin users. This should make all emails clearer and will enable us to make the site more interactive.

If you can think of anything that could make the site more useful, informative or interactive, please let me know.

David Metcalf

.... Im sure all members will join me in thanking Dave for all the hard work on organising this great web site ! Ed