UP THE CREEK

Lower Halstow Yacht Club

Spring 2021

Commodore's Ramblings

Well after a 2 year gap I find myself writing the Commodore's Ramblings again. I must first mention the sad loss of Roger Elkington. Most of you will know Roger had been a member and a committee member for many years, also being former commodore. In fact, it was Roger that convinced me to take on the Commodore's role back in 2016. He will be missed by many of us.

We have had a couple of changes to the committee, Dave Quigley decided it was time to step down, and Roger Bromley has joined us. Thanks to Dave for all his hard work over the years and thanks to Roger for putting his name forward to join us.

Despite Covid-19 turning everyone's lives upside down, 2020 saw the club grow and for the first time in its 50 year history, reach its constitutional maximum of 120 members, and we have been forced to open a waiting list for prospective members. We currently have 11 prospective members waiting. Please realise that if you are selling your boat, you must not promise a mooring or membership to a prospective purchaser. We have to consider those already on the waiting list first.

At the time of writing this, with lock down easing quite a few boats are now back in the water. Please remember we should all still be socially distancing and this terrible virus hasn't gone away. Whilst many of us have had at least the first jab, we can still catch it and pass it on to others.

A big thanks to Lawrence, who managed to repair and modify the large cradle to make it more manoeuvrable. I understand he was working on it from very early on the Sunday morning to very late, so the first lifts could go ahead on the Monday morning.

Whilst I have been stuck in doors over the lockdown, I have done quite a bit with the club website. Having spent many hours trying to resolve the abysmally slow speed of the site, and being fobbed off by the host. Each time I reported a problem they would find a minor error in our configuration that was "slowing the site down." I eventually made the decision to move the site to a new host. The problems miraculously disappeared.

Many of you will know, the committee is looking to upgrade the CCTV system. We are currently looking at quotes and should be moving forward very soon. We are looking at having one camera looking out over the creek that will send regular still images to the website. A weather Station is also being considered to incorporate on to the website, so members will be able to see from home what the weather looks like and get live weather updates from the club.

With almost all members using the online membership renewal form this year, it has saved an enormous amount of time transferring the information, thank you. Hopefully by next year I will have further improvements where you won't have to enter all your name, address and boat details unless something has changed. You will receive an email with a personal link that will take you straight to your form. No login will be required.

Thank you to all of you that had already, and all of those that opted out on your membership form of receiving a paper copy of Up the Creek. As you should have done when this edition was published, everyone will get a notification by email when the latest UTC is published on the website.

With us now allowed to use our boats, some of you are possibly planning to get away on your boat. I have heard from various sources recently that many marinas aren't accepting advanced bookings for visiting boats, or accepting visitors at all. If you are planning a trip, you would be well advised to check in advance if there is likely to be anywhere to stay.

In the unlikely event that we are able to travel to foreign ports this year there are new rules that we must abide by since Brexit. Some of it still seems a bit vague, but one thing is certain, we will have a lot more bureaucracy to deal with on both sides of the Chanel. The current information I have seen, to comply with the 90 day rule we must enter and leave Europe via a port of entry, Calais or Dunkirk for us if going to France. Failure to check out will leave the clock running and if returning to Europe after 3 months you could find you are in breach of immigration laws. Returning from Europe we must make an arrival report to Border Force on the Yacht Line number 0300 123 2012.

Hopefully the situation with Covid-19 will continue to improve and we can all enjoy this coming season. Graham Osborne has put an Events list together with the usual races and two Work party weekends. The first in July when hopefully the restrictions will be further eased and we can get some of the jobs done that were missed last year.

Dave Metcalfe

Rudderless Meanderings from your Editor

On reading a book on ancient manuscripts lately – someone's got to!- I came across a snippet of information that pinged my nautical taste buds.

Those of you who are well up on such things will know that 13th century Italy was a melange of squabbling city states and as such Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan 1392-1447 spent virtually his entire professional life waging war on his neighbours. It was therefore entirely appropriate that a member of his court should present him with a practical treatise for princes on armaments and warfare. This book, the Semideus has survived and is part of the National Library in St Petersburg.

Filippo Maria Visconti, duke of Milan 1412-47 being asked for his autograph. The duke actually looks like he is wearing some early form of buoyancy aid- though I would have thought it would be better below his chin than on top of his head.

The book is a comprehensive text on all aspects of fighting, but the pages for navel commanders on how to subdue the enemy afloat are of interest, should we ever be in battle, perhaps with irate French fishermen or perhaps a fiercely contested TOT race at the club!

Recommended tactics include the following. Put venomous adders into bottles and toss them over the railings of the enemy's craft where they smash onto the deck and the snakes can rush out and bite your opponents. Apparently this plan of action was originally proposed by Hannibal so obviously had been found to be effective.

While the snakes are hissing and attacking, throw curved metal blades to cut through the enemy's rigging. Then lob firebombs to set the sails alight. Meanwhile, have divers ready to strip down to their underwear and swim secretly under the enemy ship with awls, to drill holes in the hull causing it to sink.

This all seems most unsporting and unpleasant if you happen to be on the wrong side of such underhand tactics, but perhaps an even worse situation for the common sailor would have

been in opposition to ships of the Byzantine navy equipped with Greek Fire some 800 years before the Italians were chucking bottled snakes at each other.

The exact nature of Greek Fire is still a mystery but it is thought to have been some sort of sulphurous combustible liquid pumped at high pressure from a nozzle fitted to the prow of vessel. The plan being the incineration of the those unfortunates on board the opposition's craft. An invention from the Devil's kitchen indeed.

Greek Fire. The chaps on the receiving end seem to be in a nonchalant frame of mind- perhaps the enormity of their predicament had yet to sink in.

On a more serious note. I had notification from my insurers that they quite unfairly required sight of an out of the water survey of the old girl if they were to have anything further to do with her.

An impertinent unnecessary expense thought I -My vessel is perfick!

But I had to get on with it. On a visit to Iron Wharf Boatyard in Faversham a few years ago I had got taking to a chap called Toby Lester who is a marine surveyor and taking him for a solid citizen I therefore engaged him to do the survey, particularly as they have all those nice old boats there so he might just go easy on my character tub.

Toby "en famille" in Ironsides on her way to the Essex last year-Me an Beryl were on a reciprocal course back to Sheppey. Looks like his shirt is up there somewhere with all that sail cloth! Wonderful sight.

What started as unlooked for expense ended as being very useful exercise indeed. A useful list of things to do – nothing too dramatic thanks goodness- to make a sound boat even better, and it has to said safer which I'm told is A GOOD THING! Along with this comes good practical advice on future maintenance to keep her in fine fettle.

All in all an activity I would recommend once in a while on any boat- insurance called for or not,-especially pre purchase. Something I'd skipped on previous boat purchases before and been lucky to get away with in retrospect. Think of it as tool to make sure you're not paying too much!

He's living the life Toby as he and his family have as their domicile the Thames sailing barge Ironsides. I happened to pass him going the opposite way on my way back from Harwich last year. I hope he didn't notice that I hadn't quite completed the survey "Hit List" !

It's all done now Toby!

Anyway if you need a survey done I can recommend him.

Oh and thanks for your contributions for this edition.

Pip Pip!
Your Editor

John Williams

BUYERS BEWARE!

Having had a sailboat for 55 years I was beginning to believe the 'chorus' from all my family that I was getting too old for a sailing boat, so I gave in and started looking at motor cruisers.

Chris and Ilooked at various boats and fell in love with an Albin 25 with the dubious name of Wandray of Sunart. The boat was moored at Harleyford Marina (near Marlow), and following a river trial we decided to buy her. We had a tight schedule as we wanted to bring her home before the locks closed for the winter and to fit in with the boat lift at the club. For this reason we decided not to have a survey. The engine (Volvo MD3B) was smoking so I knew we had some problems. As it was white smoke we were told it was probably because the boat had only been used for short journeys and needed a good run, but we still went ahead.

We left Harleyford Marina heading down stream on 31 October 2019 on a sunny autumn day but there was a yellow warning from the Environment Agency and we were advised not to undertake the trip but being intrepid we thought we would take our chances.

Having been up river on a number of occasions we were familiar with the locks but our journey was delayed due to most of the locks being unmanned and some of them out of action we had to contact the emergency lock-keepers on two occasions.

The plan was to moor at Windsor for an overnight stay but we decided to press on because the lock problems had made us late. However, we got as far as Old Windsor lock and had to moor there as it was dark. We had taken a homemade chilli to eat which we had taken out of the freezer that morning but unfortunately it hadn't thawed and the boat doesn't have an oven, just a gas hob. Never mind, we thought, we can go in search of a pub or restaurant. Little did we know that where we had decided to stop was in the middle of nowhere and was next to Ham Island – a sewage farm! Not only that, we were directly under the Heathrow airport approach so it was pretty noisy. We had porridge for our evening meal that night!

The following morning we set off at 5am and it was cold, raining and dark and we had to go through a few more faulty locks before arriving at Teddington lock at 3pm for our overnight stay. We have always enjoyed staying at Teddington as there is a great pub alongside (The Anglers).

We left Teddington at 5.30am on 2 November and had a trouble-free journey through London, in pleasant weather.

At some time during the journey a fuse had blown and we had no VHS radio (thank goodness for mobile phones). We had been warned that there was a storm looming and we met it head on at Thamesmead. We managed to get to Gravesend in strong winds and heavy rain with some of the waves big enough to break over the bows. The weather was too rough to pick up a mooring so we tried to anchor. What a time to discover that the anchor was too small for the job; it didn't hold for more than a couple of minutes. We eventually managed to get into the channel at Gravesend Yacht Club and tie up. At high water I decided to enter the marina and leave the following morning (*Chris wasn't keen to accompany me for some reason*😊)It wasn't until it was too late that I discovered that we had now been neaped, as the marina is so silted up with mud that the depth of water is very shallow, and although we were afloat they said they couldn't open the gate to let me out for at least a week.

After five days in the marina I had an engineer

look at the engine to find out why it was smoking. He told me that the head gasket had blown, there was water in the oil, there was a serious diesel leak from the fuel pump and the engine was not worth repairing – oh joy! At this point the marina told us that in nine days all the club boats would be coming into the marina and it was likely that I would be trapped there until April until they were lifted out. So I decided to have her lifted out and transported by road.

I then had to do my research to find a new engine and decided on a reconditioned Yanmar as I had one before and they have a good reputation. My good friend Jim, who is a retired engineer, said he would help me fit the new engine but he was going to Australia and wouldn't be back for three months – then we had lockdown due to COVID, so we didn't get started on fitting the new engine until June 2020. Then I discovered that the new engine was half an inch too wide for the engine bay. I was beginning to despair, but fortunately Jim was able get round the problem by making new brackets. However, there followed a long woeful tale of discovering bodge-ups from previous owners and the engine was finally in and running by the end of August.

The electrics were a nightmare but thanks to Les Long's expertise these have been replaced. I am sure there will be more problems to find yet, but I am hopeful our newly named NELLIE will be in the water by the Spring of 2021.

John Neligan

Small barge Cygnet seen in Stangate a few years ago.
Built in 1881 , and I understand based in Snape.
Such things are dreams made of.
Ed.

Update from the Commodore

Since I wrote my ramblings a couple of weeks ago we have had the devastating news of the death of Ray Cracknell after falling from his boat. Ray a long term Committee member and currently in his second year as Vice Commodore will be dearly missed by us all. Whilst it will probably never come out as to how he ended up falling from his boat, this has come as a real shock as it brings home how vulnerable we all are on our boats, and how fragile life is. Our thoughts go out to Ray's wife Rita at this difficult time.

Lower Halstow Yacht Club Events 2021

- Based on high water Sheerness.
- TOT – "Top of the Tide" race around the creek – courses as advised on the day.

Date	Time	Height	Event
09.05.21	12.23	5.5	TOT 11.30 start
15.05.21	15.32	5.5	TOT 14.30 start
12.06.21	14.42	5.5	TOT 13.30 start
19.06.21	07.48	5.1	Pursuit race various start times
03.07.21	08.02	4.9	Work Party
04.07.21	09.03	4.8	Work Party
11.07.21	14.28	5.5	TOT 13.30 start
18.07.21	07.15	5.2	Red Sands Race 08.00 start
25.07.21	14.21	5.7	TOT 13.00 start
01.08.21	07.03	4.9	Round the Island Race 07.30start
08.08.21	13.35	5.5	TOT 11.30 start
22.08.21	13.25	5.6	TOT 11.30 start
05.09.21	12.29	5.4	TOT 11.30 start
19.09.21	12.23	5.5	TOT 11.15 start
09.10.21	15.12	6.1	TOT 14.00 start
10.10.21	15.53	6.0	TOT 14.30 start
16.10.21	09.56	4.9	Work Party
17.10.21	11.07	5.2	Work Party

QUIZ TIME!

Nautical Anagrams to Solve

AMPSOCS

LAWDSIN

BARDROAST

NOCHAR

GAS THE BREAM

SINKER NAP

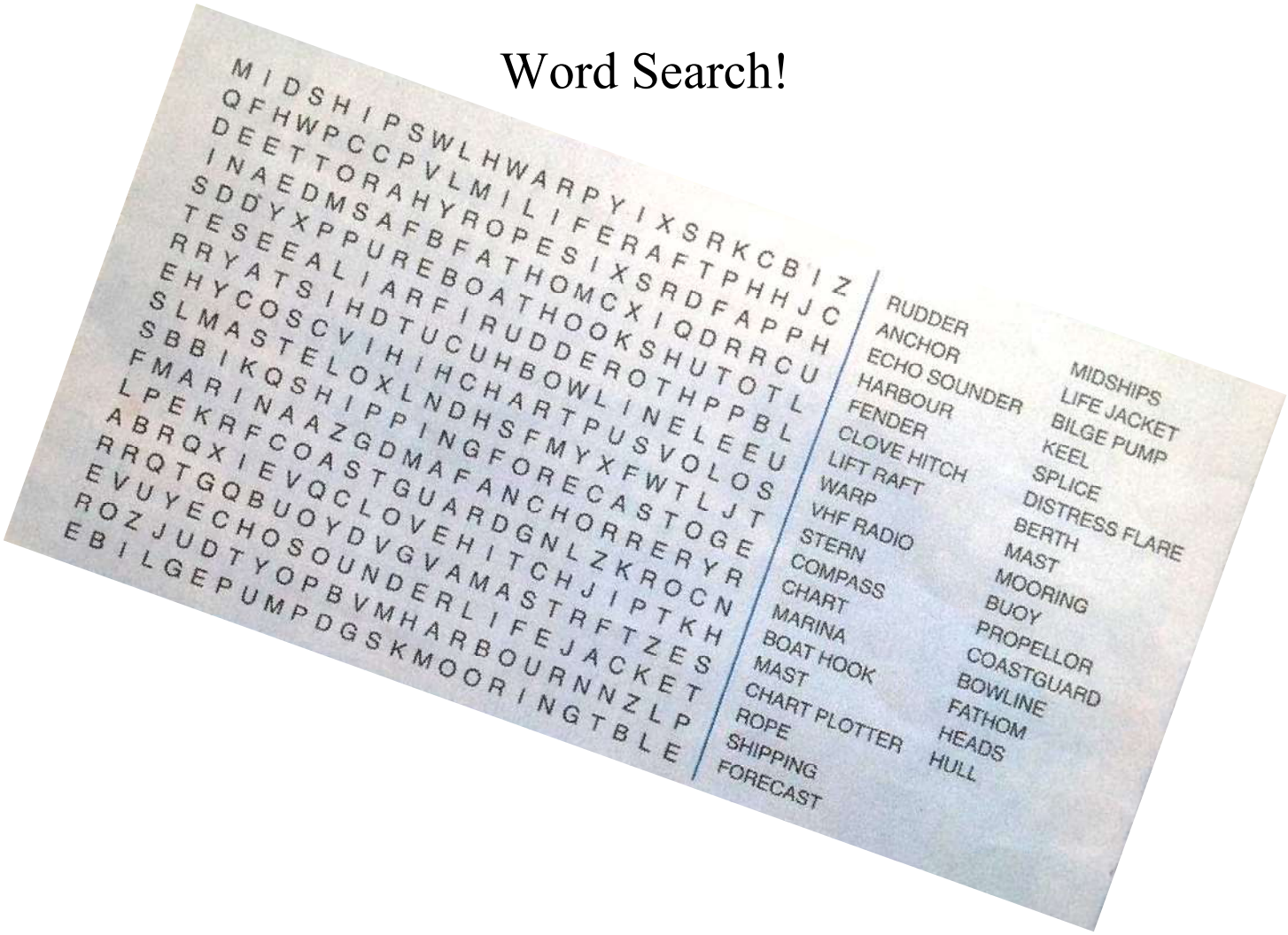
KEGS BEE ILL

AUNT FOIL

RUG BEE

JET ICE FLAK

CUSTARD AGO

BOIL FATE

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