

Roach Sailing Association

www.paglesham.org.uk/rsa

September 2005 Newsletter

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Chairman's report

Dear Members

After reading the proof for the newsletter, I am of the opinion that our Association is healthy and in good spirits and I thank all of those of you who have contributed to this newsletter.

The cruiser section is increasing in members and the racing has been as keen as ever, with up to fourteen starters on one occasion alone. The dinghy section is also showing signs of development and a number of weeks ago had it's biggest turn-out for many a year with twelve starters. Well done everybody.

On the social scene, the George and Dragon has again benefited from our many visits and Fred even gave me a lift back to the quay on one occasion when my hip was playing up. I think he likes our lot.

Our annual haul to Fambridge was a great success, and we were completely over subscribed, but Sylvia was able to pack us into the 'Glass House' instead of the dining room at the last moment, I was pleasantly surprised when just about everybody joined into the spirit of the occasion and dressed up, and many thanks to George and Simon who provided the entertainment for the evening.

Our laying up supper will be at the Royal Burnham Yacht Club on Saturday October 15th. I look forward to

seeing you all there when we can enjoy our usual convivial exchanges.

Rodney Choppin

Memorable moments at the RSA Trafalgar 'Do' Fambridge Aug 13th 2005

Anne Boulter



There was the silhouette of Vice Admiral Edwards, resplendent in bicorn and white frilly shirt etc, as he was taken ashore. The sight of so many in costume was extremely colourful, especially when being ferried too and fro by Paul and 'helpful John'; and the locals seemed genuinely amused as Fambridge was invaded by quite a few attractive 'French tarts'!

Colourful and pristine flags were hoisted on the adventurous ARABEL and Jonathan's pigtail adorned with a black bow, has to be his hair-do for the future.

The criss-cross Union Jacks stuck in the back were rather reminiscent of some Geisha girl!

Lined up outside the Ferry Boat inn for the group photo, the ship's photographer didn't understand why he couldn't see the camera lens – then he remembered he had a patch over one eye! The ship's surgeon, Mike Green had tales to tell of his feminine frilly shirt which had raised eyebrows in the charity shop, and we ate our dinner trying not to look at his blood-stained waistcoat – yes, it was tomato ketchup.

The cabaret act of Simon and his Uncle (Simon Joel and George Phillips), with singing from the whole crew, produced excellent renderings of a dozen and more shanties. Many thanks to them for the tuneful entertainment which appealed to the regular customers too.

A plentiful raffle which included 2 bottles of Nelson's blood, was well received although Annie almost lost her umbrella and life jacket when these were selected as 'prizes'. The raffle raised £64 towards streamlining the RSA dinghy. Thank you for your support.

Altogether 14 boats made the journey and when the evening finally closed, customers in the pub, who had enjoyed our singing and merriment, stood with us as, led by our Chairman in lowly midshipman's gear, we raised our glasses to 'the immortal Memory'.

HORATIO NELSON 1758 – 1805

Ann Boulter – Paglesham 2005
An aspiring lad, no more than twelve,
Joined his uncle's ship at sea.
Prone to sickness and very small,
'Twas the place he longed to be.

He quickly learned the Navy Way,
Was made captain at twenty-one.
He earned the respect of the men below
And commanded a twenty-one gun.

He married a wife, but his love was elsewhere
In seventeen ninety-three.
Then he lost an eye and he lost an arm –
All for England's victory.

Calvi, St Vincent, the Nile and Spain –
These battle honours he earned.
A little girl, Horatia, was born.
Emma's love had not been spurned.

In eighteen-o-five he set sail again
To meet the French in battle.
With the 'Nelson Touch' he planned to fight –
Their cages he meant to rattle!

The Victory sailed to Cadiz with the fleet,
They engaged amidst blood and stench.
Trafalgar's name etched in history now
When England beat the French.

Lord Nelson was shot on the deck that day
And mourned through the country wide –
A sailor who lived and fought for his Land

Once more is our Nation's Pride.

A small piece of history

During the battle of Trafalgar, HMS Victory led Nelson's fleet into battle with the objective of destroying the French Admiral's flagship. Naturally Victory became a prime target and she was hit several times - destroying her mizzen (aftermost) topmast and damaging the wheel. With the ship in trouble, Manxman John Quilliam leapt below decks to steer her from the gallery for the remainder of the battle. His heroic actions later resulted in promotion to captaincy and the title of "the man who steered the Victory at Trafalgar". In his honour, the Isle of Man has issued two 1-oz Silver Crowns: the first depicting the British breaking the enemy line with a cameo of John Quilliam; and the second illustrates the ships at battle with cameos of Nelson & Napoleon.



RSA Sheds

We will be organising further work-parties to repair the sheds at Paglesham. We do need to keep them in reasonable repair as they are essential for storage of outboards and oars.

Baa Quilliam is having extensive work on Barn Row including replacing all the boarding. Baa has kindly donated some excellent lengths of the old, which is only five years old. Ken Wickham has also donated some corrugated sheets for the 'mushroom shed'. Let JL or Richard know if you can help with some 'restoration'.

Restoration of Boom Boat DALLY

We are restoring an old boom boat to be used as a general purpose work-boat Paglesham and shared by all. The hull is in reasonable condition, and she is a worthwhile project for restoration.

At the moment she is in Carters Yard for surgery to the hull, but note all assistance is welcome! We have an engine donated by Peter Edwards, but if anyone has any of the following items to donate, it would be appreciated!



Seacock, Water filter, Stern gland greaser,
Morse controls, Oak for bilge keels,
Marine ply (decks, engine case), Pine boards (floor etc)

*Fuel tank, Paint - suggest naval grey
Depth sounder, Battery, Battery isolator switch
Engine control panel, Fuse box*

If you can help, please call Richard Bessey, John Langrick or Jon Walmsley

Crouch Harbour News

Richard Bessey

I have attended a few meetings of an advisory group, set up by Carol Starkey to steer the Crouch & Roach Management Plan. It turned out that this group discussed the same matters, and was attended by the same people as the Crouch Harbour Advisory committee. The groups have now been merged, and Carol has been nominated to join the CHA advisory committee, and contribute to the agenda. Carol is employed by Essex County Council, but is based in the CHA office.

The Harbour Dues proposal for most craft is a sliding scale from £5 to £30 depending mainly on size, and a £100 fee for ski boats and non-compliance. Every vessel must display a plaque (exceptions such as tenders will be clarified). Final details will be published in the autumn. Both the RSA and CAYF contributed to the debate, and the CHA has agreed to continue working with the clubs to collect harbour dues, whilst keeping them reasonable, particularly for smaller craft.

Matters concerning abandoned boats and houseboats on the saltings around the estuary, including at Paglesham, were raised at recent CHA meetings. Whilst wooden boats in the past have ended their lives gracefully on the saltings, modern boats do not decay and are becoming a pollution problem. Whilst houseboats are a traditional part of the scenery, the uncontrolled increase in numbers is clearly a problem. The CHA have now written to many houseboat residents, and posted notices on boats on parts of the saltings, requiring them to be moved.

Brandy Hole Series

The Eight Ball and Committee Boat Bay

Steve Dowding

Last season John A entered Glayva into the Brandy Hole Winter Series. The programme had races on Sundays with start times varying according to the tide mostly every 2 weeks until Xmas for the Series, followed by a Pursuit Race on 27th December.

John sailed the first race with Steve C crewing in Force 6 winds - all boats well-reefed, but some flying spinnakers downwind. Glayva finished with a bent and cracked mainsheet track. Steve normally crews aboard Surah for RSA new-member Dan.

John had posted a message on our [roach] newsgroup inviting crew, and I joined him for the rest of the Series (missing just one due to missing my train after an unannounced platform change).

The Eight Ball

(being an account of the race of 26th September 2004)

I was given the helm on Glayva in light airs.

It was a fairly mixed fleet, maybe 2/3rds declaring spinnakers, in two divisions with starts separated by 5 minutes for a faster class and a slower class. Courses up there favour pointy boats and we saw no gaffers. One of the ones to watch, especially for me, was Non Sequitur, a fully-crewed Evolution 25 promising the chance to see how Stortebeker should be sailed.

A course change for the Class A boats was signalled from the Committee Boat, after the 10 minute signal I think, and not noticed by all of the lead boats at least one of which sailed the original course to a turning mark further down the river;

The fleets divided between the south and north banks for the first leg downwind against the tide. We went under the south bank.

As the spinnaker mob from Class A left us behind by the top of the moorings, and one by one we were overhauled by the Class B lot, we found ourselves in a close race with a Beneteau of around 36 feet. After those on the north side had crossed and the two fleets merged under the south bank we were still the leading non-spinnaker boat, but over about 10 minutes the bigger boat slowly came up behind us our mission became to stay in touch with them. Around the mark and on the windward home leg we felt we were doing pretty well until I ran us aground. I was trying overhand to stand on across the shallows for the final tack through the moorings to make the line off BHYC in a single board. The final turning mark was tucked tight in the bend at the bottom of the Brandy Hole moorings and was to be left to starboard. Passing it we stood on towards the 8knot speed limit buoy, the depth shoaled rapidly, John called for a tack, I dithered feeling we'd foul the buoy and immediately past it we on the mud. After some minutes we were off again to finish last.

The race described above was fairly typical of the rest. Richard B sailed with us on a couple of occasions, Jon W once, and later in the Series John's regular helm Elaine became available again. Justine B together with Richard were aboard for the Pursuit Race.

The breeze, which bends with the landscape, was normally stronger below the Fambridge moorings, and often fell quite light on the final reach where it was normally a beat up through the moorings towards the finish off BHYC. All were in Force 3-4 or less, and waves do not build in the upper reaches of the Crouch. There is mud however, and not a lot of water around many of the racing marks, and we were to go aground some more (always sailing off). We fouled a turning mark once and had to do our 720 turns, and had numerous sheet tangles in the cockpit during tacks.

It is of course a learning curve to come together as a crew, as it is to acquire the local knowledge. We stood no chance against the leading boats with their full, and practised crews, but we finished every race placed last, and just on turnout placed sixth overall in Class A.

Committee Boat Bay

(being an account of the Pursuit Race of 27th December 2004)



Running down through the Fambridge moorings, two spinnaker boats still to pass us

There was ice on the deck that morning, but some warmth in the sunshine, this being one of those glorious high pressure, clear blue sky winter days. Elaine wasn't able to get back from visiting her family, but we were joined by Richard and Justine.

Start time for each boat was determined so that theoretically all should finish at the same time. Being on paper one of the fastest boats most of the fleet started before us. We were a little late for our start – my fault again having helped put us aground insisting on checking how much water there was(n't) around one of the turning marks for the return leg in the entrance to Clementsgreen Creek (there'd be enough later on the way back). So we were overhauled rapidly by the three spinnaker boats starting after us, finding ourselves with the entire fleet to pursue before we'd got below the Fambridge moorings.



Running down to the turning mark, Surah beating back centre with tan sails

The fleet turned back at the mark in the top entrance of Bridgemarsh Creek, and on the return leg up Longpole Reach we were making a little ground catching up on those boats slower to windward. We'd got ahead of a ketch and a Spring 25 and had a few more in our sights, and were tacking in towards the south bank. In the first race Steve C had informed John that the south bank is steep to all along except in just one the spot. It's here the Committee Boat anchors to form the other end of the start line across to the post off Stowe Creek, and is the one place along the seawall where there is a noticeable bend inwards – in the main its almost dead straight here. I can't remember what the conversation was in which we were so engrossed, but we stood on into the bay and onto the mud. Richard and I bounced from the shrouds for a good ten minutes before we were off again and on our way to finish last. Consistency!

To the Scillies

Richard Bessey

On the week we chose to go West, the flood tide started in the morning, so to get the ebb we needed to leave or arrive in the dark. However we had a quick passage from Paglesham to Dover on the first day, anchored in the outer harbour overnight, and managed Brighton, Cowes, then Poole in day-sails. Each day the forecast promised 'Easterlies Later', but they did not materialise, so we were close-hauled motor-sailing most of the time.

Cowes interruptus

Cowes was gearing up for Cowes Week. We nearly managed a free berth on a warehouse jetty, but were nabbed by the harbourmaster. So we rafted up outside Shepards Wharf and went for a curry (very good at the 'Bahar' – take your own wine). It rained in the night and blew in, so I shut the hatch and fitted washboards. We slept late in the cosy cabin and were still lazing about pleasantly when there was a rap on the hatch; I appeared red-faced to hand lines as our inside neighbour was setting off.



It was blowing hard on the nose when we reached the Western end of the Solent; I chose to cut across the sands into Christchurch bay, then tack out round Hengistbury Head. We had some seriously steep overfalls to get through and a long tack across to Poole, but motored over the tide into the harbour that evening. At Poole we picked up an unused mooring by Brownsea Island, for which nobody asked us to pay. There is a fuel berth in the middle of the harbour, so we filled up and set off next afternoon, making Fowey in 24 hours.

In Fowey, we had frequent showers. In between the showers, it rained. It was that particular West Country rain that is barely perceptible, yet soaks you to the skin within minutes. However, we visited the Gallants Sailing club, for showers, and the Royal Fowey YC for a posh drink. We had some excellent fish & chips (Sam's) and walked it off along the headland. We were alongside a moored pontoon (£12), and used the water taxi. The next day we left for Falmouth after lunch; still raining.

Gadgets – great when they're working but...

We had found the radar quite useful at night and in poor visibility. As well as tracking other vessels, you get a much better sense of distance than by vision alone. When conditions were a bit murky at night, we could not tell if there was thick fog or not; but when a light came into view, the radar confirmed that we could see 2 miles. It

was particularly comforting to see the Cornish headlands pass at a safe distance beyond the fog.

A few miles before Falmouth, there was a smell of burning electrics, and the autohelm packed up. Later inspection showed a fried circuit board in the control unit. That night we joined the Falmouth SC at their weekly rendezvous in a room behind the Chain Locker pub, and were introduced to Bob, a local chandlers' engineer, who visited Philomelle next day. We clearly needed a new control unit, and getting one would take nearly a week.

We spent 2 nights (@ £19.50) at the Harbour Commissioners' pontoon. We were in a very convenient location, right in the centre of Falmouth, so we got some shopping and laundry done. In the evenings we had some pleasant walks along Falmouth's beaches. Somehow we managed to avoid visiting the maritime museum. After another great Nepalese curry, we came across Tim and his replica ?? Folkboat. Over a few drinks we were regaled with tales of the animal aggression of atlantic depressions. Tim was living proof that weeks alone in a small boat can seriously tip you over the edge..

To Newlyn and Scilly

We left Falmouth at 5.30am Saturday, beat round the Lizard and into Mounts Bay in force 4-5 NW with showers. By chance we were in company with Cairdhu, a 40 ft 1962 Laurent Giles cutter which had been in Falmouth the day before. They sailed throughout, we had to use the 'iron topsail' to keep up our heading and eventually motored into Newlyn. This was stuffed with fishing boats, many looking inactive.

To our relief, there was one yacht already in situ – 40ft, 12 tons of Dutch steel – looked just the job to tie up alongside. A chirpy Welshman welcomed us, but pointed out that he was leaving at 4.30 the next day to catch the tide up the Bristol Channel.

Within the hour, we were joined by Cairdhu, and then by more boats, until we were 7 in a row - all of whom were firmly told about the agreed 5 am departure time.

Newlyn's granite buildings rise steeply from the harbour, and we climbed the narrow streets, imagining the generations who have trod this way to and from the sea. As in other Cornish places, the gigs were out practicing from the beach. A new lugger was being built in the traditional way by the shore. But the dominant activity is still the fishing industry, though it faces hard times.

The fishing quay stands on great piles in the harbour, and we had a long climb down a suspended iron ladder in the dark. Up at 5:00 next morning, we planned our departure, and with Cairdhu's engine holding the raft out, we slipped out with our Welsh neighbour. Soon we were out of the bay with the prospect of Lands End on the beam, and heading past Wolf's Rock lighthouse towards Scilly. It became quite blowy and rough in mid-morning, so we hove to and put up a smaller headsail; however it moderated and we had a stiff but steady sail the rest of the way to Hugh Town in St Marys, where we picked up a large buoy (with a chain strop), and went ashore in the 'rubber dubby'.

To be continued.....

Benfleet Rally – a Ditch Crawler's guide

John Langrick

Friday morning and the wind is blowing SW 4-5. Alan had already set off in RUTH and we were to join him in the Middleway. RUTH has had extensive work this year and Alan did not want to strain her hull unnecessarily, so we were hoping the wind would not increase to the possible 6 forecasted.

I was joined by Dauntless member Martyn for the weekend and we were to be accompanied by RSA member Peter in his Debutante KETOS. Peter had never travelled via the Havengore route and this was to be his first experience at 'ditch crawling'.



Peter Edwards in KETOS

Two hours before high water, the three of us approached the Havengore bridge and to our delight, all was in order and the bridge keeper opened up immediately. The bridge has been closed on and off since the beginning of the season and we were certainly delighted to see the span swing upwards. We had another boat planning to join us, Jonathan in ARABEL. She would be ditch-crawling through the bridge early at 5:00 am on the Saturday so I called out to the bridge keeper who confirmed that he would open at that time too.

KETOS and RUTH followed our track via the mouth of the creek and through the withies that mark the entrance. Once over the broomway, we set course for the end of the old 'submarine boom'. Although the wind was on the nose, the tide helped our progress to our first stopover at Thorpe Bay. I have a mooring there for SWANTI and we hope to pick up further visitors moorings for RUTH and KETOS.

At Thorpe Bay, and now at the top of the tide, the sea was very uncomfortable, with coamers breaking over the side of the boat. Certainly both RUTH and KEYTOS would need help picking up a mooring and so we went to the first visitors mooring in SWANTI and the two of us attached a long rope to the buoy, Peter came alongside as near as possible, we threw him the rope and left him to that mooring. When safely attached, we turned to Alan in RUTH. We first suggested she came alongside SWANTI, but the wild waves meant that this was just impossible and so we performed the same 'trick' with a second visitors mooring.

Finally we all sat on our moorings while the surf broke over the sands all around us. We had booked a meal at the Yacht club, but the water was so rough, we tried to put off the trip ashore hoping that the wind would abate, it never did. So with Alan's trusty dinghy, three of us went ashore to reserve our meals, leaving Alan who wanted to ensure that Ruth settled on the sands OK. The trip ashore was very wet, especially as the dinghy beached and a coamer fell over the stern with me still sitting there. But before long we were sipping a pint in the yacht club and ordering our meal. We also had a meal prepared for Alan to me microwaved when he managed to get ashore. By 10:00 we were all drying out after a great meal.



Sailing barges off Southend Pier

We were able to walk out to the boats after the meal and get our heads down to a good sleep, but were again woken about 3am as the boats rose and bumped on the hard sand. We ate breakfast with the tide on full flood and prepared scrapers and brushes so that we could help Peter scrub the large amount of weed which had accumulated this season on KETOS. RUTH and SWANTI had managed a scrub-off the previous week, but Peter was planning to take this opportunity. Alan set off to anchor with the barges of Southend pier. It was to be the Barge match today and they are one of Alan's passions. Eventually the tide left us and we set too with scrapers to clean KETOS's hull. The tide would give us about four hours today as they were neaps, this would give us ample time.

As the tide reached us again, we were called by ARABEL who was now moored further up the beach towards Shoebury.

ARABEL was bought by Jon in W Florida and sailed back earlier this year with RSA members Steve Dowding and John Apps. She is a 37' Southerly, drawing 3'3" with her plate up, just ideal for shoal waters, which was the reason Jon purchased her in the first place. Jon had long envied the creek crawling of SWANTI and had yearned to cruise the local shoal waters. HE wanted to make the most of it this weekend.

We all made our way over the sands, past Southend Pier and into the Ray at Leigh. Alan was now at the mouth of the creek waiting with Stephen Web in Seaking MARY LOU. Strangely Alan was moored stern onto a buoy, and called out as we sailed by 'don't ask'. We later learned that he had managed to get the mooring warp around the prop and had to promptly leap overboard to try and free the rope. With the help of Stephen, he managed to break free, and still had the stern line attached awaiting our arrival. Eventually five boats started to wind our way up Benfleet creek, SWANTI, KETOS, MARY LOU, RUTH and ARABEL.

KETOS and MARY LOU tied up against a lighter, ARABEL against the end of the yacht club Jetty with SWANTI and RUTH in our favourite place on the slipway. Strangely the two boats that had the shortest trip was HAYNOR and MOONBEAM, but were both neaped at the other side of the creek and had to come by car for the meal. They had planned to sail with us to Kent, but were now neaped for a further five days. We all sat down to vegetable soup, steak pie and fruit crumble washed down with liberal helpings of wine and beer.



MARY LOU and KETOS against the lighter.



SWANTI and RUTH on Benfleet Yacht Club slipway, ARABEL is on the end of the jetty

Another RSA member Richard Bessey Justine and Naomi joined us for drinks, they would join us on the Sunday at Harty Ferry. They have PHILOMELLE a 34' Buccanan sloop that draws a good 5'6" and would have difficulties at Benfleet. He would sail round 'the long way', i.e., round Foulness and down the Swin, to join us on the Sunday afternoon.

We were up and away early on the tide and made our way back down Benfleet Creek, the same way most Dauntless boats started their life. We anchored up in Hadleigh Ray for breakfast. ARABEL set her anchor with KETOS on the port side and SWANTI on the starboard. We all enjoyed a shared breakfast after which SWANTI and KETOS set off with a gentle SW wind to carry the ebb down the Thames to the East Swale and Harty Ferry. ARABEL stayed behind a while as the crew wanted to fish and later paddle in the Ray. Alan wanted to get back to Paglesham that evening so he sailed down the Southend shore, back towards the Havengore, he would need to wait until the evening tide, but the weather was fine, winds light, just right for a lazy sail. MARY LOU continued on to the Medway where she would have to punch the last of the ebb back to Upnor.

The wind increased eventually to F3, and we made the Columbine in fine time but had to motor up the Swale still against the ebb. There were a few barges at anchor

off Hart Ferry and we set the anchor between two and KETOPS came along side for lunch and a beer, while waiting for ARABEL and PHILOMELLE. Both arrived an hour before the flood and we immediately started up Faversham Creek... and that is where the fun really started.



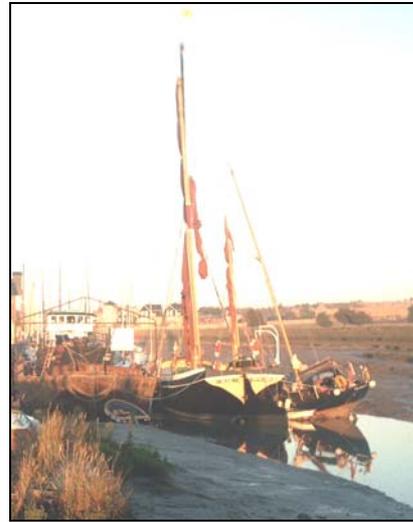
RUTH off Southend slowly sailing back to the Havengore

Sailing barge ALICE moved into the creek before us. She is a particularly large barge and note it was one of the smallest Neap tides of the year. We could see her slowly winding her way with her topmast just visible over the marshes. I usually get the 'pleasure' of leading the way and so motored slowly up the creek followed by KETOS (Draft 3'), PHILOMELLE (Draft 5'6") and ARABEL (Draft 2'6"). Suddenly the barge slowed to a halt and I slackened off and remained about 200 meters astern. Shortly she was off again, but eventually she grounded to a halt still short of the Iron Wharf at Faversham, and completely blocking the gut-way. By this time the tide was starting to ebb. I just managed to squeeze past and sharply turn around, dragging the rudder and just managed to reverse, almost full throttle to moor against another small yacht herself moored three boats out from the quay. KETOS managed the same trick in front of SWANTI and ARABEL squeezed against SWANTI. She put her plate down into the mud to prevent us all sliding out into the gut-way and secured her main halyard to the Quay. Further down the river, PHILOMELLE just managed to get her bow close to the stern of ALICE and with a huge baulk of timber and rubber tyres in place, the skipper winched the front of PHILOMELLE so that she leaned against her at an almost comfortable angle of about 70 degrees. And there we were for the evening! The following morning the tides were predicted to be .2 of a meter less. We were in for fun in the morning again.

The local pub had stopped serving when we arrived, so after liquid refreshment, a search party went off to find the local curry house for a take-away which was eaten back on ARABEL.

I had a pretty sleepless night, wondering if we would be neaped at Faversham for the next few days. What made things worse was that KETOS was next to a boat that had already been neaped for two tides and she drew less than us. Optimistic as ever, we rose early, ate breakfast and prepared for the flood which seemed an age to arrive. Richard layed a kedge around his stern and managed to swing PHILOMELLE around so that she pointed down river again. ARABEL followed and I had to motor SWANTI off the mud and back into the gut-way after

ARABEL. Finally KETOS brought up the rear. PHILOMELLE went aground a couple of times, but ARABEL was close behind as a tug and she soon started moving again. Finally we were safely back at Hart Ferry and in deep water.



Looking back down the creek, PHILOMELLE can be seen laying over onto the barge

ARABEL and PHILOMELLE rafted up for more breakfast, while SWANTI and KETOS took the benefit of the ebb to Sail back over the estuary, past the huge new wind farm and up the Swin to round the Wittaker at low water.

Again the trip was easy for a Dauntless with 18" draft, but there is certainly some intrepid keel boat owners and they got away with it.. this time.

I don't like Brussel Sprouts either
Jon. Walmsley

Crossing the Atlantic is, for me, a bit like eating peas. Until I'd put one of those green balls in my mouth and felt my tongue recoil in horror from the flavour, some wag was always going to say to me "How do you know you don't like them?". Having tasted the salt and peppered the side I can, without fear of contradiction, say that ocean sailing is not for me.

So, you may ask, how did this 'trip of a lifetime' come about? I can undoubtedly lay the blame with LADY HAMILTON Dan. Dan, as some of you may already know, has been living in the Med aboard the good LADY. Having found a buyer for her, he started looking around for a new boat and discovered that prices were very reasonable in the USA. I got sucked into his quest and found myself a British built lift keel Southerly 115 at a very reasonable price in Florida. A few 'phone calls and E mails followed by a trip to Sarasota on the Bay of Mexico and, on the Fifteenth of March, I was the proud owner of ZEE JANE, (I renamed her ARABEL after a boat my father had once owned).

The next issue was how to get her home. Shipping would have been fairly easy as Southerlys regularly go the other way when they are exported. The cost was also quite reasonable, but I felt I was missing an opportunity (?) to

explore a very different sailing area. The decision for ARABEL to cross the pond for the second time under her own keel was sealed when, with very little persuasion, I managed to sign up two crew from the RSA flock. To spare their blushes, and to allow me to be frank, I will refer to GLAYVA John and STORTEBECKER Steve as the Navigator and Bosun respectively in this account.

At the end of April I flew to Orlando with the Bosun and as much luggage as our small allowance would permit. I thought we weren't going to get out of the airport due to my passport being overstamped with 'sensitive' countries. The radar reflector in my luggage raised an eyebrow too. We weren't the only ones taking advantage of the pound/dollar exchange rate, someone had been through with a solar panel earlier that day. We arrived quite late in Sarasota, but were kindly put up by Mike whose company was carrying out work on Arabel to prepare her for the crossing. The next day we went to pick the boat up from Charlotte Harbour where she had been hauled out to have the rigging replaced and the generator fitted. Scott was navigator for the day as we made our way along the Intercoastal waterway, eventually docking at a vacant plot in Sarasota which was to be our base for the next week.



ARABEL on the dock in Sarasota

The Bosun and I found plenty to do for the next couple of days. The Bosun looked fetching in his underpants and see through paper bunny suit as we vainly tried to seal hatches and windows with copious amounts of Sikaflex. Once he had landed I sent the Navigator our GPS position, but worryingly he did not turn up until the following morning. He claimed to have navigated to within a quarter of a mile of the boat but was stopped by some water. I pointed out that he had brought a rubber dinghy with him on the plane so this was hardly an excuse for spending the night in his hire car.

A day of torrential rain and thirty five knot winds was spent shopping in West Marine and Walmart. The Navigator bought fifty bottles of Shiraz at four dollars a bottle and conspired with the Bosun to buy food that was "good for you" and therefore virtually inedible to my juvenile palate. We also found a second hand book store and filled the shelf in the foc'sle with such literary classics as 'The Deep', 'The Shining' and 'Star Wars' (all my choices).

The following day, Friday the Sixth of May, after one week of preparation, Mike and Tom had finished off the remaining jobs and we set off for Fort Myers via the fuel dock. We still had problems with the generator, but Mike was hopeful that we meet up with a representative from

the generator manufacturer en route, possibly in the Bahamas.



Leg 1 Sarasota to Fort Myers 17 hours, 65 miles logged

It's my opinion that he enjoys sailing

We waved Mike goodbye mid afternoon, Tom had vanished when the workshop was struck by lightning, and successfully moored at the fuel dock. I caught the davits on departure, too much rudder. A lovely evening sail with porpoises in company. The North Westerly gave us a beam reach but strengthened in the night which meant we had to furl the bimini. On arriving I managed to give the jetty a glancing blow when the tide caught ARABEL. I'm sure the ever present dolphins and rays were amused. I was on a steep learning curve as regards 'bigger' boat handling. The day was spent fixing more bits and, of course, visiting West Marine. An arduous walk in the hot sun and the elusive tram. We got a taxi back to the dock.

Leg 2 Fort Myers to Key West 26 hours 115 miles logged

God loves all yacht venturing antipodeans

An early departure saw us running aground as we chose a different route out. A quick bit of keel pumping and we were back in the channel. Key West appeared on the horizon just after dawn, but our entry was delayed by running out of water. I could, and did, blame the Navigator, but in his defence we were navigating using fishing charts as they were cheaper. After finding the entrance on the other side of the island we successfully docked at Key West Bight Marina on the pontoon next to the replica, (from the waterline up), of the schooner 'AMERICA', (after which the famous cup is named), which I had last seen in New York a few years back. Berthing was \$87.50 per night. No wonder most people anchor out in the bay and come ashore by dinghy. We decided to stay only one night.



The Schooner AMERICA

Calamity! I couldn't get the air conditioning to work. After much head scratching and reading the manual, a 'phone call to Mike and I cleared the air lock. What a relief. This was to be our last port in America which entailed a visit to immigration to hand in our 'green' cards. The sign outside said no cameras or mobile 'phones, but I'd forgotten about the two large steel tape measures until my bag was x rayed. The unamused security had obviously never heard of the doctrine of measuring twice and cutting once. Key West is very picturesque and historic with lots of excellent restaurants and bars, well worth a visit, but a long drive from the mainland. Duval Street has a good selection. The Navigator indulged himself with oysters at \$1.99 a dozen. In the morning pottering and lengthy breakfasts were rudely interrupted when we found out we had to leave by eleven or incur an additional night's charge.



Woolworths of the South

**Leg 3 Key West to Havana (Caymen Islands) 26 hours
115 miles logged**
Some wives accept nautically tarnished individuals

For those of you who did not know, the USA and Cuba aren't the most friendly of neighbours. If a yacht visits Cuba, it is not allowed into US waters for the year following. American boats are not allowed to go to Cuba as they could be seen to be supporting the country in some way. It is also not unknown for foreign yachts to be given the once over by an American gun boat whilst in the vicinity of Cuba. We later, in the Azores, met the owner of a yacht that had been boarded, although they had not visited Cuba. For this reason whilst in America we had referred to this leg as having a destination in the Caymen Islands, just in case we were overheard in a public place. You can never be too paranoid.

The Navigator, having been on a course, knew that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. So, ignoring local advice that we make a 'feint' to the East before heading for Havana, he set a course direct for the Cuban capital, (with a slight detour to avoid Sand Key), once we had left Key West. A good ESE wind propelled us through the rest of the day and night. The two hour watch keeping system worked well and land was sighted early in the morning. The Navigator was spot on taking us straight to Havana. I had been calling Cuba for over an hour on the radio, but had no response until we entered the harbour. We were told we could not enter the commercial harbour and we were directed to the Hemingway Marina ten miles to the West. There was a lovely view of Havana from the water as we made our way along the coast.



Havana Waterfront

Confusion as to the whereabouts of the marina entrance was resolved by a friendly sports boat piloting us in through a tricky entrance made even trickier by the wind. Our docking skills improving with each test, we awaited the authorities. I have never had so many people visit my boat. Over the next hour we received immigration, (Maria), agriculture, customs administration and someone else, whilst being guarded by three officials to make sure that no-one left the boat. Everyone was very polite and courteous, each asking permission before they came aboard. Lots of hands were shaken, the boat searched and all our hand held GPS's sealed in a bag for the duration of our stay. What was also nice was that there were no guns in evidence.

Once the formalities were complete we were visited by the dockmaster, allocated a berth and invited to his office to complete a contract for our stay. We tied up opposite a British superyacht with a mast that reached for the sky, (even more impressive at night when each of the four sets of spreaders was lit up), put the air conditioning on and headed for the swimming pool. The Navigator made friends with a German couple on a thirty foot Van de Stadt that, as it turned out, the skipper, Harold had built himself. Harold came on board to show the Navigator

how to use his laptop. I was so embarrassed by the 'caravanesque' aspects of ARABEL, especially when compared with Harold's sleek craft, that I could not stop apologising for her. I think, secretly, that Harold was impressed by the air conditioning. Dinner was an 'all you can eat' Chinese located within the marina complex.

We took the free shuttle bus to Havana in the morning. I won the 'first to spot a Lada Niva' game, as usual, though these weren't as impressive or as multifarious as the 1950s American cars, many of which were in splendid condition. We wandered aimlessly, known as 'stravaiging', round the city soaking up the atmosphere, the market, the food and, of course, the music. During our lunch we were serenaded in an upstairs cafe. The Navigator, due to his burgeoning beard, fancied himself as an Ernest Hemingway look alike and indulged himself with the author and sport fisherman's favourite tippie, a mohito.



1950s Americana Cuban Style

I bought some locally made gifts in the market including a wooden Chevrolet, marachas and a wind up tortoise. The adjacent picture market was excellent, although none of us bought anything. We also went to the state run vegetable market where the Bosun got upset by lots of stall holders shouting at him and waving vegetables.



Havana Vegetable Market

Leg 4 Havana to Bimini 3 days 6 hours 300 miles logged
Don't ever start thumping a yacht's engine

After two nights in Cuba it was time to say farewell to an island that I would happily have stayed on for another two weeks. The formalities on departure were similar to those we had experienced on arrival with the addition of a sniffer dog. The Navigator reckoned that they were searching for stowaways. Once we were cleared the ever helpful Cubans began untying us even before I had a chance to get on the helm.

Outside the marina we were hit by twenty eight knot headwinds and seas which the Navigator estimated to be greater than fifteen feet. We put up the main with two reefs in it and only unfurled one third of the genoa which gave us five knots on the wind, some fifty degrees of course for the Bahamas. In these conditions our tacking angle was one hundred and thirty degrees! To cap it all, I came down with some virus which made me feel sick. Many thanks to the Navigator for standing some of my watches.

After four tacks we were within fifty miles of Bimini and decided to motor to try and make the island before dark. The Gulf Stream had given us a good lift, our paddle wheel log recording fifty miles less than the GPS. On approaching the low lying island the Navigator again insisted that his role ended once we had sighted land. However, when we, inevitably, hit the sand bar that crosses the entrance to the harbour, it was the Navigator who was despatched to pump up the keel. We docked at the Blue Water Resort just as a shark went by. I made a mental note not to sit on ARABEL's bathing platform cooling my feet in the water. Everyone ashore was relaxed and laid back. We were told we could check and clear immigration the next day.

The island is very small, you can see all of it from a golf cart, which is the main form of transport, in half an hour. Having done the local restaurants to death, swum in the clear blue sea, bought some much needed tins and the Bosun having sewn sails like a demon, we left after three nights in this island paradise. The only down side to visiting the Bahamas is the three hundred dollar cruising permit!



Bimini Beach

Leg 5 Bimini to Bermuda 9 days 8 hours 1075 miles logged
Kaki enigma takes off seawards

It is about one thousand miles from Bimini to Bermuda. At first you head North to avoid the Grand Bahamas and their outlying reefs, before heading East to Bermuda. The Gulf Stream, up to three knots, and the Easterly wind,

saw us make good progress to our turning point for Bermuda reaching it on the second day. Due to the wind direction we continued heading North and wondered whether to make for Cape Hatteras instead of Bermuda. The wind eventually turned in our favour but then went light. We put the pole up to stop some of the sail “floppy floppy” and used a boom preventer. The Navigator had a theory that if we passed thirty degrees North we would get a better wind. This turned out to be true, the Westerly at last filling in and allowing us to goose wing. An accidental gybe in the night had me cuddling the Navigator in the scuppers. For two weeks afterwards it hurt when I laughed. We also played with the cruising chute, or shoot as the Navigator entered in the log. It stayed up for two hours with the Bosun and Navigator giving it their constant attention. I’m not sure who was in control, them or the wind.



Never trust a Cowboy with your cruising chute

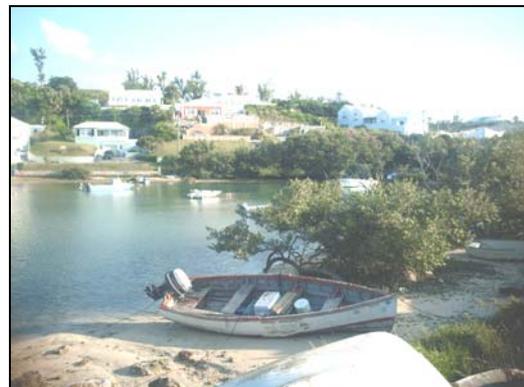
During this leg, the generator stopped running intermittently and decided not to run at all. To keep our large domestic battery bank happy we needed to run the generator for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. This seemed to balance the load of the Autohelm, kettle, microwave and fridge. Forced to put my engineering hat on despite feeling unwell, I discovered water and rubbish in both the generator and main engine filters. It appeared that the main engine was more capable of coping with the odd bit of water due to its larger capacity and three cylinders, than the small single lung generator engine. This seemed to do the trick, no generator man needed now.

A series of rain squalls gave me chance to have a shower and wash my hair. I even managed to wash my salt stained sailing suit. ARABEL has tankage for only fifty gallons. Despite carrying a further fifteen gallons in containers, we were very nervous of running out of water, especially on the long legs. To mitigate against this, we turned off the pressurised system and used only the hand pump in the galley for drinking and rinsing hands. Everything became encrusted and damp with salt.

When we were within two hundred miles of Bermuda, a distance that I had threatened to motor if necessary, a good Westerly breeze piped up giving us a sleigh ride to the Island, interrupted only by us ‘wineglassing’ the jib and needing the engine to sort it out. At eleven in the morning of the Twenty Seventh of May we sighted land and after having contacted Bermuda Harbour Radio on Channel 27, entered through the Town Cut into St Georges Harbour just after three in the afternoon. Again

the Gulf Stream had favoured us in the early part of the leg giving us a lift of over seventy miles on the one thousand mile journey.

We went, as instructed, to the back of Ordnance Island where we were quickly cleared. Chancing our luck we went to Captain Smokes Marina and bagged the last berth on the end. This was a real test of mooring stern to, and was accomplished in front of the other crews with an efficiency that belied our experience of such manoeuvres. Alongside was PEARL FISHER a fifty nine foot Oyster that was on her way to the Med when her gooseneck and generator forced a Bermudan stopover. We were the smallest boat in the Marina by some twenty feet, I guess if we’d have been bigger we would have been surrounded by one hundred foot monsters. Such is life. We switched on the air conditioning and went exploring.



Quiet lagoon Bermuda style

The intrepid Bosun found an internet café that was run by the local Mayor and his cockatoo. After news from home and a cappuccino the next morning, we came across Dan’s new boat TRAVELLING STAR anchored in the harbour. Dan and his crew, Keith, had arrived the night before, but had ‘stood off’ until first light. It was spooky that we had arrived within twelve hours of each other given that we had said goodbye in early April with the words “see you in Bermuda”. I had assumed that Dan would have passed through Bermuda much earlier, but delays in getting the boat ready had matched his schedule to ours.

More filter cleaning and sail repairs, this time by a local sailmaker, kept us in Bermuda for five nights. Thoroughly refreshed, repaired and revitted, we said goodbye to Dan and Keith and set out on our longest leg.



Dan and Keith on TRAVELLING STAR

Leg 6 Bermuda to Flores 16 days 5 hours 1975 miles logged
WEST injected, now keeps sailing



The Azores

It was now the First of June, although it was only three and a half weeks since we had departed Sarasota, it seemed longer. Rather than heading North East, the wind dictated a course nearer to East and, as it veered, pushed us South East until on the third day we tacked and ended up heading North West! The Navigator got very excited when he sighted 'PINDAR' and was called by them on the radio. They were racing to Boston, thirty eight days out from Cape Town and kindly obliged us with a weather forecast. The wind continued to back, and on day four our course to steer matched our course over the ground. We even got the cruising chute up for three hours. The storm that the calm had foretold duly arrived and we used our third reef for the first time, for twenty four hours. The wind eased and went North before building again to over twenty knots from the North East. The Navigator decided to make Northing this time in the hope of picking up some nice Westerlies which were rumoured to be above forty degrees North. When the Westerlies came in, as we passed thirty nine degrees North, they did so with a vengeance on the evening of day thirteen. We hove to for five hours during the worst of it. The Westish winds remained for the rest of the trip to the Azores.

One night we were visited by a flock of small birds who took up residence in and around the cockpit. By dawn they had left. These complemented the other wildlife which included turtles and the ever present dolphins that left phosphorescent trails as they played around the bow at night.

This leg was littered with breakages, most worrying of which was a cracked window in the topsides, which fortunately did not leak. We discussed what to put in it should it let go. The most annoying failure was the Autohelm which stripped its cogs on day twelve. This necessitated hand steering by the watchkeeper for two or three hours at a stretch. We also had an engine electrical problem, navigation and compass light failures and wet electronic instruments including two handheld GPS units.

Because of the Autohelm problem we decided to head for the most Westerly of the Azores, Flores, in order to make a 'phone call to Mid Atlantic Yacht Services, MAYS, based in Horta. Somehow a buzz of the island to pick up 'phone reception turned into a landing, a decision that none of us regretted. We moored amongst a group of other yachts in the well protected harbour, (unless the wind is from the North East). We couldn't decide whether to use the cold shower that the pilot book said awaited us at the dock, or take the dinghy across to the nearby waterfall. We decided on the former and were met at the quay by customs and immigration. They must have seen us coming. Very quick and easy formalities and we were officially back in Europe.



The Harbour of Lajes on Flores

The island is very beautiful, lush and green with, I am told, many interesting plants. My main interest, however, was restaurants and cafes, I was not disappointed. We even got some washing done. The next day the Bosun went for a walk up into the hills while the Navigator and I ate lots and mixed with the other yacht crews. A lovely steel yacht had foundered in the harbour and was in the process of being cut up by a Dutch salvage crew. It was quite sad to see.

There was very little wind as we left Flores. The wind that had driven us there had switched off on our arrival, the Azores High showing its dominance. This was to be our motoring leg. The portugese men of war that we had seen occasionally in the Atlantic were now being spotted several at a time sailing their way to who knows where. According to the Navigator, who being Antipodean knows more about poisonous animals than most, it is the quantity of poison in the long trailing strands, that are up to one hundred and sixty five feet long, that kills you.



The Harbour isn't protected from the North East

**Leg 7 Flores to Faial 26 hours 140 miles logged
Man in self tacking rig effects some success**

I was on watch as we approached the harbour of Horta in the early morning, surrounded as usual by the playful dolphins. There is a beautiful half cupola from an extinct volcano encircling a lagoon that you round as you approach from the South West. A magical time, which I cut short by waking the crew to prepare for docking.

We moored at the Customs Dock alongside a large American Halberg Rassey out from New York. As usual we traded tales of gear failures. They won; their batteries in their new boat had got so hot that they had blackened the cabin sole. The British yacht berthed behind us had a cockroach infestation, (we had nearly gone alongside her), and big problems with their furling main and genoa. It appeared that most yachts coming from Bermuda had experienced a recent bad storm with winds up to fifty five knots. I think that we had been lucky and just caught the edge of it, the Navigator's decision to 'heave to' ensuring that we spent as little time in it as possible.

Once cleared, we were allocated a berth in the harbour, rafted three out, but handy for the showers. The first thing you notice in Horta Harbour is the murals left by every visiting yacht which cover the harbour walls in their hundreds. It is bad luck not to leave your mark. Our first priority was to get the Autohelm repaired. We had already contacted MAYS from Flores and knew that they were confident about effecting a repair. Unfortunately the Autohelm engineer had fallen off his motorbike that morning and no-one was sure when he would be back at work. I also started the paperwork for paying VAT on ARABEL as I was importing her into Europe.

The Navigator and I took the opportunity to try out the local restaurants, the Navigator being very impressed with

the value for money. On visiting the supermarket to replenish our stocks, I purchased paint and brushes so that we could appease Neptune. After a bit of persuasion, and a crate of beer, the Bosun did the honours, spending an entire day, more or less, lying on his stomach painting a wall. The Engineer returned to work on the second day and fixed our Autohelm with new brass cogs. We decided to leave the following day after two nights in Horta.

The next morning we saw TRAVELLING STAR anchored in the harbour. We delayed our departure until the afternoon to have lunch with Dan and Keith.



The Bosun working flat out

Leg 8 Faial to Falmouth 13 days 17 hours 1500 miles logged

Simon tried racing and vanquished, achieving individual glory

On leaving Horta we steered North East to clear the island of Sao Jorge to starboard followed by the island of Graciosa. It was great to have the Autohelm again. This area is a whale watchers paradise and we weren't disappointed seeing a whale blowing in the distance and, later in the leg, I was lucky to see two close alongside. Light winds dictated some motoring in the early part of the trip especially as the wind conspired to head us. We didn't properly clear the Azores high until five days into the leg. As usual we went from too little wind to slightly too much. On day seven we had our biggest disaster. We were barrelling along at six knots, when the Navigator mistakenly believed he had three hands; one to hold on, one to hold the microwave and the third to clean out the porridge he had spilt in it. Unfortunately it was the hand holding the microwave that he discovered he hadn't got. Deep six.

Strong South West winds blew us towards home in conditions that the Autohelm increasingly found it difficult to cope with. Eventually we realised that it was the Autohelm playing up. It was not alone in having lost all sense of direction. Back to driving the bus boys! As we neared the Channel we saw an increasing number of ships which meant we sometimes left the tricolour on all night, when it worked. At midnight on the Fourth of July we spotted the Lizard and we were tied up on the visitor pontoon in Falmouth just as the pastie shops were opening.

Food was pretty high on our agenda on arrival although we did manage to fit in the excellent maritime museum between courses. We naturally started with pasties

followed by fish and chips for lunch and a pub meal in the evening with SWANTI John who had signed on as the replacement navigator. We welcomed him to our damp and smelly boat and felt envious of our former crew member on his way home to a hot bath and a warm dry bed.

Leg 9 Falmouth to Paglesham 2 days 17 hours 333 miles logged
Regular upkeep to hull

We kept meaning to stop, but somehow never got round to it. I blame the fresh North Westerly winds which had us scampering along the Channel at speeds approaching seven knots in the early part of the leg. Passing Plymouth we were saluted by the blazing guns of HMS SOUTHAMPTON; "Welcome home after twenty years away ARABEL". We identified all the landmarks as we went by, missed all the cross channel ferries and soon found ourselves motoring into a headwind across the Thames Estuary. Narrowly missing an unlit north cardinal in the dark, I'm good at swerving, we entered the Crouch and were tied up at Paglesham by dawn on Saturday the Ninth of July.



Fast Ferry and weather front off Dover

That evening I moored ARABEL alongside the pontoon at the end of Gordon's Jetty for a barbeque on the marsh. A very different jetty to the one she had left over five thousand five hundred miles behind her in early May.

Many thanks to all who made this adventure possible.



ARABEL on the dock in Paglesham

What went wrong?

- Due to plate tectonics a large gap appeared between Europe and America which rapidly filled up with sea water.

Lessons Learnt

- The Atlantic is really deep so you don't need a lift keel.
- It's good to discuss wild trips with your sailing friends during the Winter over a pint, but this doesn't commit you to sailing

further than North Farnbridge the following Season.

Laying Up Supper

The supper will be at the Royal Burnham Yacht Club on Saturday 15th October. We meet at 7:30 for dinner at 8:00. The menu will be as follows:

- Vegetable Soup
- oOo--
- Steak and Kidney Pie
- Or
- Vegetarian Option
- oOo--
- Fruit Crumble
- oOo--
- Tea or Coffee

There will be a vegetarian option, please indicate requirements on the booking form.

Richard has volunteered to take up to 15 passengers over in Philomelle, please speak to Richard direct if you would like to come aboard for the trip over. Otherwise, like last year, I suggest we all try and share transport, or stay overnight locally. Some members will travel in their own boats and moor in the Burnham Yacht Harbour or on a mooring.

The RBYC now has outside caterers and unfortunately the price has gone up considerably.

<p>Laying Up Supper Registration</p> <p>I would like to reserve _____ seats at £21 per person for the Laying Up Supper at the Royal Burnham Yacht Club on the 15th October 2004.</p> <p>I require ____ vegetarian options</p> <p>Please return this form with a cheque payable to the <u>Roach Sailing Association</u> and address to:</p> <p>Richard Bessey 2 Research Cottages Paglesham Rochford SS4 2DS</p>
