

Roach Sailing Association

www.paglesham.org.uk/rsa

September 2007 Newsletter

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Chairman's Report

Rodney Choppin

Dear Members

The 'Heat-wave' of April gave us all a feeling of anticipation of a fine summer to follow, but it didn't materialize and we were left with a poorish Summer by recent records. Of course, there are those of us, and there are not may left, (the Wooden Walls of old England), who had the opportunity to apply varnish and make it STICK for a change. My father used to say "You wouldn't apply varnish until mid may," but the seasons have changed, and so has the varnish! However, the majority of the fleet were on the moorings by the end of the month.

Numerous groups did their annual cruises away from Paglesham, some up the East Coast, others to the Continent and even the USA and back. HALLOWE'EN and MARSHMALLOW had their usual sedate gentleman's cruise with intentions of reaching Aldeburgh this year, but on arriving at the Spitway, with a strong North Easterly blowing. It was deemed prudent to alter course and head for Brightlinsea. We spent the rest of the week in the River Blackwater, and I have to say we are fortunate on the East Coast to have so many rivers and creeks to play with where we can hide ourselves or enjoy those undiscovered places via the country lanes, needless to say, in search of a drinking hole or venue for our customary evening meal.

Ivor's crew David, provided the entertainment most evenings with his numerous tales and stories, especially those of his associations with the Hon. John Prescott (Two Jags) and the culinary review he (David) wrote in the Chef's Remarks

Book which was offered to him during dinner at the West Mersea Yacht Club. That should hold us in good stead for many years to come at the W.M.Y.C It is certainly and excellent venue to go by road or sea for a meal.

Our annual pilgrimage to Fambridge was a roaring success with forty sitting down to supper. (Well done JL, thank-you), and the new pontoon facilities made for safer farewells after "Time gentlemen please" down at the river.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce new members this year:

Roger Anderson - TAMAKI
Alan Eades - GIGI
Graham Harrison - SECRETS
Chris Jones - PICARA
Stuart Redman -
Mike Salter - ATLANTA
John Negus - SWEET SURRENDER

I will finish by wishing you all enjoyable sailing for the remainder of the season, no doubt John L has got us all slotted in for laying up, and I look forward to meeting you all at the Brandy Hole Yacht Club for our Laying Up Supper and Prize Giving.

-o0o-

Laying Up Supper

By popular request, the Laying Up Supper will again be at the Brandy Hole Yacht Club this year and the date is Saturday **3rd November, 2007**. Those who came last year will remember, the club is at Hullbridge. Turn down Ferry Road as if you were crossing the river. There is a Budgens store on the corner by the mini roundabout. Take the last turning to the right down Pooles Lane and the club is at the end of this road, next to Brandy Hole Yacht station (which is a separate enterprise). We suggest meeting at 7 - 7.30pm

We have secured a better rate for the meal of £15 per person and details of the menu are as follows:

Vegetable Soup or
Melon
--oOo--
Roast Beef and Yorkshire Pudding
or
Vegetarian Option
--oOo--
Fruit Salad and/or
Ice Cream
or
Cheese and Biscuits
--oOo--
Coffee and mint

Once again, Richard has kindly again agreed to take the reservations for this and cheques can be sent to him and payable to the *Roach Sailing Association* at the address below and note he will need to know your option for starter, main course and sweet:

Richard Bessey,
2 Research Cottages, Paglesham, Rochford SS4 2DS

Racing Update

Richard Bessey

Firstly, can you please return all racing trophies to myself or a committee member as soon as possible.

We've had another good turnout this season, 20 boats on the results list in spite of some less than perfect weather. Both traditional and modern boats are amongst the winners, with one more race to run – the Roach Plate on Sun 7th Oct. STRAVAIG leads the series, with contenders PHILOMELLE, IMOTHES, ROBYN and ULABELLA not far behind.

Here's an idea for an extra race in 2008 – the Boat Swap Challenge – each boat to be raced and crewed by someone else – the owner and usual crew are not allowed on board! Check your insurance and let me know if this would be a problem. Would you dare let someone else race your boat (how embarrassing if they won!)?

Three men in a boat - To Holland in IMOTHES.

John Langrick

I still have nightmares about my return trip from Holland in SWANTI a few years ago, but still had a hankering to make

the journey again, but this time to keep a better check on the weather. Well that was my intention. Two other RSA members volunteered to join me, Peter Edwards and George Phillips. Both had long wished to visit Dutch shores and jumped at the opportunity.

Richard and Justine in PHILOMELLE and Paul and his friend Mike in SURAH had made the passage on the previous Saturday and we planned to meet up in Dutch waters as soon as possible.



Chart of our route

On Navigation

I borrowed Richard's Dutch Inland Waterways charts and scanned them into my Mitac Mio, (Pocket PC Navigator). I also scanned the Admiralty chart of the Southern North Sea. I had heard there were some major changes to traffic movements around Harwich, so splashed out in the new portfolio for the East Coast. Peter and George also planned to bring their Mitac Mio units. Peter also brought his Garmin ETREX unit with his Yeoman chart plotter. IMOTHES uses a Garmin 12XL integrated to radio and autohelm. I also brought along SWANTI's Garmin 45 – as a spare. I guess we did not want to get lost at sea.

We all kept a close watch on the weather for our Wednesday start. There is a web site buoyweather.com, which allows one to select a 'virtual buoy' in the North Sea and view weather predictions in that area. With this and the general weather forecasts we were able to get a pretty reasonable view of what the likely weather would be. The Mon and Tues had very strong winds from S/SW. Forecast was 6-7 possible 8 in the afternoon, decreasing to 5-6 in the evening. The Wednesday looked better with winds of 4-5 and possible 6, but then the wind was set to increase again on the Thursday. Wednesday looked the better day and with HW at 09:00 we planned to set off from Pag, up the Gunfleet channel to the Long Sand Head buoy and then off to 'the other side'.

The morning was beautifully clear and crisp, with a good SW wind about f4-5. At 09:10 we set sail with jib alone and eventually we picked up a good 6-7 knots over the land, clearly benefitting from the increasing ebb. Our plan was to view the weather again when we reached our turning point off Harwich. We had a very leisurely lunch travelling up the Gunfleet, but it was clear that as we turned more eastward, we were likely for a rougher time, so I put a precautionary two reefs in the main, which we had not unfurled so far as it was not necessary. The wind increased to a good 5-6 knots as we reached the Long Sands where we kept a good look-out due to

the new traffic systems, basically a roundabout around the Sunk light vessel. We turned before we reached that as all traffic seemed clear.

About 10 miles towards our next mark, the West Hinder, we received the next weather report. Winds increasing 6-7 possible gale 8. The wild was to increase as it moved from SW to S. We discussed options and as IMOTHES seemed to be continuing at a good 7+ knots we thought we should continue. Now with fully reefed main and just a scrap of furlled jib, we were heeled over on starboard tack and running steady. The boat seemed to be managing very well as was the crew ... so far,

I read the log now, which clearly shows the wind increasing, the crew feeling more uncomfortable but the miles falling away beneath us. We were quickly approaching and crossed the shipping lanes before dusk, but by now the wind was whistling in the rigging, IMOTHES was well heeled over and through the huge waves with 66% of the crew feeling very sick. The autohelm could not be used as IMOTHES screwed her way across the alarmingly large seas and George (Philips) took most of this leg on his own with myself ducking below and trying to concentrate on navigation. Not very pleasant with the boat heeled over so far and squirming through the water.

But she appeared to be taking whatever the weather and sea threw at her and now with winds of gale 8, we maintained at least 6.5 knots overall. Sometimes a large coamer would wash over the starboard bow, but this was mostly deflected by the spray hood, with only a few awkward 'wet ones' plopping over into the cockpit. I remember down on the navigation table seeing the port window completely under.

Other than general discomfort, we approached the West Hinder very quickly and as we took a turn south to cross the second set of shipping lanes, we started the engine and furlled the main. We could have made Ostend comfortably, as I had the waypoints already loaded on my GPS. We knew that the weather was predicted to be worse on the next day, but would quieten down this night. Tomorrow could well mean an even more uncomfortable trip up the coast. The alternative was to continue on to Breskens in Holland where I tempted the crew with an early morning arrival but the whole day to rest in the marina. We had been through a pretty uncomfortable night, but as we would have a stern wind, and good tide to take us up the Belgian and Dutch coast, we would have an easy sail under jib alone again.

I managed a couple of hours sleep as we passed Zebrugge and onwards towards Flushing. We arrived at Breskens about 5:00am and eventually found a berth where we all took to our sleeping bags by about 6:30am.

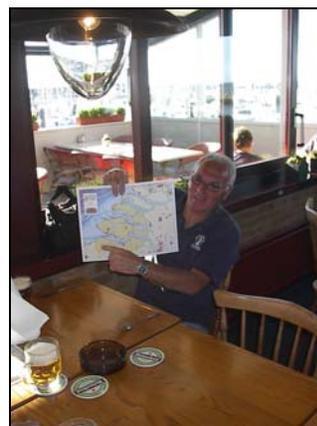
Peter's wife Jean had cooked us one of his favourite chicken currys which served admirably as a lunch/breakfast as we emerged from our bunks in the early afternoon. We paid our dues and visited the shower leaving us feeling much more refreshed and relaxed.

I tried to call PHILOMELLE on the VHF and was amazed when he responded from what must have been over 30 miles away. We arranged that we would meet both PHILOMELLE and SURAH at Yerseke, a small port on the Oosterschelde, on

the following evening for dinner. It was reputed that one could buy excellent mussels here. This would mean a morning sail up the Westerschelde, through the Kanaal Door Zuid Beveland and a very short trip down the Oosterschelde as we emerged at the northern exit.

Looking around IMOTHES and washing away some of the salt, George noticed a 2" machine screw laying on the stern deck. It had vibrated out of the port spreader. There is a small hole through the socket on the mast and this appears to have fallen out during the trip. We spent the whole of the journey on starboard tack, so that shroud must have been loose and the screw dropped out. Luckily the spreader remained in its socket. This was the only damage from our windy crossing.

I purchased a 2007 chart of the Westerschelde (it appears that navigators can be fined for not having the latest chart on board). The chart shows the channels and shoals of what is quickly shifting estuary and river. That evening we visited the Bar in the Breskens Yacht Club where the place mats for dinner are in the form of a chart of the inland seas. In the past we have used these as a very useful trip planning guide. So we gathered a few for our own notes!



George points out our location on the place mat at the Breskens yacht club

The morning brought more gale warnings with winds of 6's and 7's, but in the right direction to set us quickly on our way up the Westerschelde. I plotted a route keeping us out of the channels and just outside the main fairway navigation buoys. We had a fine sail up to the canal and after locking in, we ate lunch as we motored North. The wind continued to blow strongly from South West as we emerged into the Oosterschelde and with jib set made the short journey to the mouth of the creek leading to Yerseke where we found a comfortable berth and waited for the arrival of PHILOMELLE and SURAH.

The harbour at Yerseke is mostly dedicated to Mussel fishing boats. These large vessels are moored to the west of the marina. They are serviced by a seriously capable 'cross between TCS marine, an engineering works and South Essex Fastenings'. I managed to purchase new machine screws for the spreaders, this time with 'nylock' nuts.

We booked berths for the two new arrivals and by late afternoon, we were all tied up in the marina and getting ready for supper. We all ate in an excellent restaurant which looked

quite small on the outside, but opened up into a large covered courtyard in the rear. I had to say that I missed out on the mussels, but Richard and Paul certainly rose to the challenge. The fish soup was excellent. In the morning, with wind still howling, Paul 'volunteered' to use his bosun's chair to re-fit the screw in the spreader of IMOTHES.

Our next port of call was to be Goes, pronounced locally as 'Hoos'. This pretty town is nestled inland and approached by a long canal. The mouth of the canal and lock is only a few miles to the West and we set off, mostly under power as we still had a nose wind. SURAH sailed a long leg out into the Oestersched and back, but PHILOMELLE and IMOTHES slowly motored to the waiting pontoon outside the initial lock gate and had lunch.

We all entered the lock late afternoon and motored along the canal to Goes, a beautiful straight tree-lined avenue. We had to pass through a couple of locks, but it became very apparent that many others had the same idea about visiting this location. It was Saturday evening and as we entered towards the town centre we had great fun trying not to collide with larger motor boats who were trying to turn in front of us. To our starboard were blocks of flats with locals leaning over their balconies as we jostled for room in the canal below. Our mast heads inches from their balcony rails. Eventually we were ushered on to the centre of the town, a small basin surrounded by houses and literally crammed with boats of all sizes. SURAH found a berth rafted about four out from the quay, I pirouetted IMOTHES and came alongside, but PHILOMELLE had no room to turn, came alongside IMOTHES but facing in the opposite direction. We were well tucked in for the night!



Goes (on a quieter day)

That evening we had an excellent meal at an Argentinian restaurant where, I have to say, the Burrito's were excellent. We kept the staff awake until the early hours before retiring and clambering over many hulls to get back aboard.

The following day we planned to enter a lock to Veresmere, an expanse of water that is now non-tidal, but still retaining the swatchways from when it was tidal. We planned to spend the night on one of the many small islands that are in abundance. The wind still remained very strong and still from the SW. We all entered and cleared the lock in formation, ready for a sail into the 'meer'. It is a bit like the upper reaches of the Thames with yacht clubs either side and dinghy races in abundance. Avoiding these is quite a challenge.

On a starboard leg, I was winding in the jib, but had not put the handle fully into the winch, due to the fact that it was full of rain-water. The result was that the 'floating winch handle' fell overboard and was left slowly and tantalisingly sinking in the water. We quickly came about and furled the jib, but after at least half an hour search, were unable to find it again. Luckily we had a spare on board and so continued. By this time SURAH and PHILOMELLE were well ahead and speaking to them over VHF were able to get the lat and long of the small island they had found. A short sail brought us to a position where we could see their mast heads behind an island and we were quickly tied up to the same.



A quiet jetty on Veeresmere

That evening we shared an excellent meal on board and were up lazily in the morning for the start of a sail up to the sea wall at the NW end of the mere, We had a short sail to Kamperland for supplies, this is a small village at the end of a canal we had visited when last in Holland. At the mouth of the canal I filled the tanks in IMOTHES with fuel and water.

An afternoon sail up the mere was only punctuated by the occasional grounding (not clever in a non tidal lake). It was clear that port and starboard buoys really mean what they say. The channel literally stops at the buoys. At the extent of the mere, we tied against a jetty and had a short walk over the dunes to look out over the North Sea. PHILOMELLE and SURAH arrived shortly after similar 'groundings' and we all ate chips at the small café in the dunes.

A short late afternoon sail brought us to the pretty town of Veere. Again the place was completely packed, but after a search, again found a spot about four 'bottoms' out from the jetty and moored alongside.



Veers, clocktower centre, we were rafted out on the town quay to the left on this picture.

Veere used to be a tidal fishing port prior to the floods which marked the building of the Dykes in the 60's. Now it is a popular haven for boats of all sizes and types. Above the quay side is a clock tower of repute as it plays a melody every hour, on the hour.. and half hour... 24 hours. No need for alarm calls in Vere. We had an excellent meal in the yacht club, which still has the RSA burgee hanging from the rafters.

In the morning we had a short trip to the locks at the Middleburg Canal where we ate breakfast as we motored on to the town of Middleburg in the centre of the canal. I wanted to visit the chandlery there to try and purchase a new floating winch handle, but no joy. I would not like to try and argue with the Harbourmaster here where we were instructed to tie up against a british 'Gaffer' returning from the OGA rally at Hellevotsluis a week earlier. PHILOMELLE and SURAH continued down the canal to Flushing while the three of us went shopping.

When going through bridges or locks, there is often a long delay where one has to stay still in some sort of formation while the number of boats increase all around you. As soon as the bridge or lock gates open, there is a mad dash to the next 'jam'. Because of this we were able to catch both boats up by the time we were at Flushing and we all entered the lock together.

A short sail over the Westerscheld brought us to a safe berth back at Breskens. We again had an excellent meal at the yacht club where Paul had, what he believes, were the best mussels all trip. We were early to bed for an 8:00 tide and back over the North Sea.

After winds all week, it was disappointing to hear that the winds were falling to 2-3, but from NW. We set off with light winds, but an enjoyable sail making steady progress direct to the shipping lanes. PHILOMELLE set course for Norfolk as Richard and Justine still had a few days vacation left. Paul and Mike were to head for Shotley Marina while the crew of IMOTHES planned the route direct back to Paglesham.

The winds fell lighter and lighter and we had to start the engine to cross the shipping lanes, but I was very surprised find that the engine on IMOTHES seemed to be lacking power. Increasing the throttle seemed to have no effect at all. Not wanting to stop dead in the shipping lane, we plodded to the other side where in calm seas and no wind, we dropped all sail and cut the engine.

George 'volunteered' to dive overboard and have a look at the underside and immediately came up with a mooring rope which had entwined itself around the prop. It seems the sea was a bit cold at this point so we all celebrated with a hot drink while our hero warmed himself up.

We had to motor much of the rest of the journey with very little wind, but heard a 'mayday' as we motored down the Gunfleet. We could only hear the shore side of the conversation so never got much of the details, but it seems that SURAH had put her keel firmly on the Cork Sands and although no imminent danger, the lifeboat and helicopter were launched. You need to speak to Paul about the rest of this story, but both crew and boat were safe in the end.

We arrived safely back at Paglesham by early morning after an otherwise uneventful sail (motor) back.

Dawn raid on PHILOMELLE

Richard Bessey

Dawn, off the East Norfolk coast, course NNE barely stemming the tide. Justine was on watch and I was just creeping out of my sleeping bag when she popped her head in to check the radar. Nothing showing. Which was odd because there was a vessel coming up fast astern. Very fast. The slick grey hull swept up and stopped a little to starboard, the artillery on the foredeck clearly visible; simultaneously a rhib sped out from under her stern, six black-clad men aboard, and were instantly alongside (the rhib, we later learned, does 35 knots). Flight, we decided, would be fruitless.

"How many persons aboard?" was the first question. "Just two". Three of them boarded at the shrouds, the rhib stood off. The leader glanced around the cockpit "good mug that" he commented - he'd spotted my Customs & Excise mug which I keep handy for these occasions. I explained my recent occupation (as a Customs Officer as it happens) and after that things descended into farce.

They clearly thought we were a likely suspect, tracked from Holland, hovering by night off the East coast. After all that effort they had to make a good show of it, so it was out with the ships papers (luckily I'd remembered to bring them this time), and a thorough search of vessel (rummage in the trade, and in PHILOMELLE after a couple of nights at sea, rummage is the word).

Meanwhile back in the cockpit, Justine got the light chat treatment. "Forgive me, but is there any particular reason you have a housebrick on the cabin-top there?". Justine explained how the brick goes on the stove to warm up, and does excellent service as a handwarmer. Such an unlikely story, it must be true.

Poor chaps were not very cheerful, heading back to the ship to file their reports. Better luck next time lads!



Atlantic Double Cross

John Apps

I am very very proud of myself. I have managed to get from The UK to the US and back again this year single handed in GLAYVA. I have been declared the official 3rd place getter in the Jester Challenge 06.



GLAYVA filling up with water at the Newport Yacht club ready for the return trip.

The crossing from Falmouth to Newport Rhode Island was not without its worries. I had decided to take the intermediate route this year to supposedly avoid the worst of the Lows. However the Horse Latitudes, which I was going to stick to the Northern edge of, decided this year to harbour nothing but Depressions. I had continuous Low Pressure Systems until about 56 degrees west, with only a day in between when it dropped to less than F2. I was knocked down twice in a three hour period while trying to sail under bare poles in an F10 with 10 metre waves. The first knock down was a bit of a disaster as I had just taken my top storm board out to have a look around and ended up with several tons of water in the cabin, which sloshed from side to side as I tried to bail out. The knock down also ripped my wind indicator from the top of my mast, bent my 'raincatcher' radar reflector into some interesting shapes, flattened my spray hood and broke my babystay. My sea toilet came loose and on the upswing came roaring across the cabin emulating a canon loosely and breaking everything in its path. Fortunately the skin fittings held and I had shut off the valves at the start of the storm several days previously.

I still continue to learn from Jon Walmsley. This time I started making scones and wearing bare feet because it started to get hot below 40° North.

Six days out of Falmouth on the return trip, my Port inner shroud started to break at the lower swage. So it looks like new rigging again this year. But I think I'll get Ken to make up a fitting so I can have twin inner shrouds one angled back behind the centre line of the mast and fit Ubolts just in front of my Genoa tracks.

'Miss Piggy' my wind vane steering, in her unique artistic way has written a song about our trip, which she would like to lead us all in singing next time we have an RSA singalong. I will now hand over the writing to her.



Miss Piggy's Lament

By Miss Piggy

George and Simon I would like you to accompany me on your guitars in singing my lament. Could we have it in the key of 'F Flat' as in flattened frog.

The tune is 'My Bonnie lies over the Ocean'.

I apologise for the fact that I use both the third and first person but that is Chanteuse licence.

Hmm, Hmm. [Clearing my throat – a little green frog].

Miss Piggy helms in the ocean,
Miss Piggy steers in the sea,
Miss Piggy helms in the ocean,
And I do it all for free, for free. I do it all for free.

Chorus:

Bring back, Bring Back, bring us back Safe-er-lee, safe-er-lee.
Bring us back safe-er-lee.

Alternate Chorus: [for Fine Ladies, cross dressers and others obsessed with shoes].

Slingbacks, slingbacks, slingbacks and heels for me, for me.
Slingbacks and heels for me.

Ships pass to starboard,
Fishing boats trawl on the lee,
Ships pass to starboard,
But no-one invites me to tea, to tea. No-one invites me to tea.

Chorus.

The skipper keeps the boat balanced,
The skipper trims the sails.
I do all the steering,
It's me that never fails, never fails. It's me that never fails.

Chorus.

The skipper drinks wine with his supper,
He has beer when it's hot,
There's whisky for medicinal,
Invite me to drinks, he does not!

Chorus.

We were knocked down in the ocean,
beyond horizontal it seems,
A lot of things ended up broken.
Me damaged? Not in your dreams!

Chorus.

Humpbacks sound in the ocean,
Dolphins swim by me,
An albatross flies through the rigging,
But no-one invites me to tea.

Chorus.

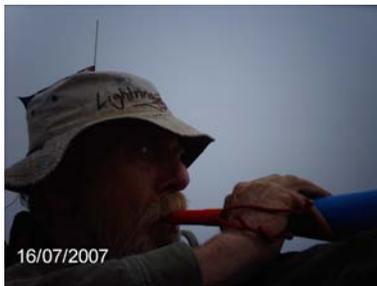
The skipper tells me he loves me,
He often tells me so,
The skipper tells me he loves me,
Then disappears below.

Chorus.



Scones are made in the ocean,
Bread is made at sea,
Muffins are made in the ocean,
But no-one invites me to tea,

Chorus.
We had fog off of Nantucket,
We had fog south of Grand Banks.
The skipper kept blowing his trumpet.
I steered all the way with no thanks.



Chorus.
There are ghosts out in the ocean.
I hear voices out at sea.
Djinns live in the ocean.
I've invited them all to tea, to tea.
I've invited them all to tea.

Chorus.
[‘Hey skipper, you’d better put on another batch of scones and get out the “Spirits”’].



Newport, Rhode Island from GLAYVA’s anchorage near the Ida Louis Yacht Club.

Ibiza to Croatia?

Jon Walmsley

For the Summer months, Dan O’Herlihy maintains the RSA’s Mediterranean presence. This year he decided to move his base of operation from Ibiza to Croatia and was after crew for

the passage. I eagerly volunteered, being glad to escape the climatic vagaries of a British early season.

I easily spotted Dan at Ibiza Airport by his trademark red Nantucket baseball cap and Orange Baltimore T shirt, looking for all the world like an undernourished American. I knew better. I knew this dress was the result of his time spent looking for a boat on the Chesapeake which resulted in the purchase of a Pearson 36 ketch, ‘TRAVELING STAR’ .



TRAVELING STAR with a bone in her teeth

A taxi and dinghy ride later, I was aboard TRAVELING STAR on her mooring in San Antonio. Equipped with an eighty watt solar panel, mizzen mounted wind generator, large fridge and even larger water tanks, she was ready for some serious cruising. Dan had already said goodbye to his friends in the town, where he had been based for the last two seasons, and all that remained was to fill the tanks and head off. While we were in the marina waiting for the tanks to reach their one hundred and fifty gallon capacity, we got an invite aboard a British liveaboard catamaran. As we sat drinking our beer in his spacious cockpit, I couldn’t help but ponder whether I would end up living on a boat in the Mediterranean wearing nothing but Speedos three sizes too small? Possibly and probably.



The Balearics

We left on On 22nd of May for Calla de Port Roig, (15 miles), on the South West of Ibiza. As our passage was to Mallorca, we could have gone round either the top or bottom of Ibiza. We chose the Southern route as the winds were North Easterly. This is a very exclusive part of the Island with very expensive large estates and beach front restaurants to match, where we sat drinking our beer in the company of people having business lunches; suits and filofaxes. In the afternoon

two boats came in which both either accidentally, or on purpose, dropped their anchors *and* picked up a buoy. During the night it became very squally. A large British catamaran dragged her anchor but was alerted when another British yacht flashed his searchlight and sounded his fog horn. The yachts that were both anchored and moored didn't budge, but the wind had ranged around in the night, so I dread to think what tangle was lurking for them below the surface.

In the morning the winds had eased, but were still North Easterly, so we had another short 15 mile hop, to a sheltered lagoon on the Island of Espalmador; which lies between Ibiza and Formentera. The island has one residential house, a Martello tower and a light house. We spent the next day moored in the Lagoon due to unfavourable winds. It was a good opportunity to explore the island and do some beach combing. We didn't wallow in the mud pools this time. I think I still smelt from my visit to them last year, I know Dan did.

The next leg was 70 miles to Andratx on the Island of Mallorca helped by a friendly North Westerly wind. Before we hit open sea, Dan spotted a submarine to starboard that gradually turned into a small island with a tower. We arrived in the evening in time to go ashore for a meal of sardines for Dan and salmon for me. The next day the wind had strengthened so we thought it prudent to make a short hop to Calla Portals on the West side of Palma Bay. It being a Sunday, the anchorage became very crowded. In search of something cold, we went ashore to the beach café. It wasn't until we leant back against a wall to enjoy our ice creams that I realised that there were a large number of girls whose swimwear was only half rigged. To aimlessly gaze around the foreshore, as you do, would give you the appearance of being a bit of a voyeur. I concentrated my attention on my ice cream. It melted furiously under the strain.

That evening, a lady toured the anchorage in a dory gathering up other British cruising couples for drinks on board her large motor yacht. Despite the fact that we were the closest boat to them, we didn't get an invite, even after Dan appeared in the cockpit in his long black wig. We were obviously thought to be the wrong kind of couple.

Porto Colom, on the South East side of Mallorca, was our next destination, a day sail of 40 miles. We spent the next day in harbour waiting for a favourable wind for Menorca. We found a British café and treated ourselves to a full English breakfast, watched a home makeover program set in Rayleigh and read their English newspapers. According to one of the rags, the Spice Girls were reforming. It struck me as odd that this hadn't been mentioned by the BBC World Service. Having spent the day exploring on foot, we returned in the evening for burger and chips.

A good North Westerly wind, which strengthened during the day, gifted us a swift 70 mile passage to Mahon the capital of Menorca. This is the second largest natural harbour in the world, (after Pearl), and is where Nelson allegedly wooed Lady Hamilton at the 'Golden Farm'; a large mansion which still has commanding views of the port and anchorage. There is a small, well protected anchorage a 20 minute dinghy ride to the East of the town, sandwiched between Lazareto Island; which was used for quarantining and 'La Mola'; the massive nineteenth century fort. We were in the company of yachts from France, Germany, Sweden and Holland. As usual there

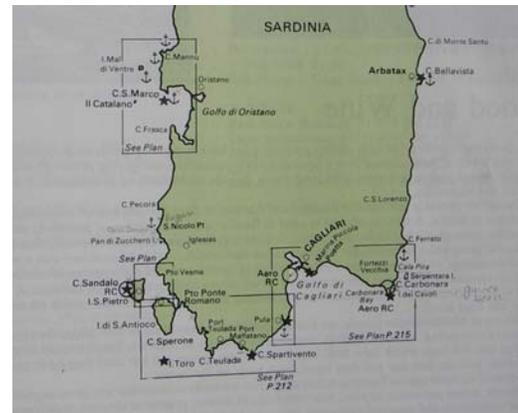
was a smattering of single male yachtsmen. The Swede in this group had a dog, which must have compensated for his lack of human company. Dan had previously cruised with a cat. We discussed the merits of either canine or feline companionship.

Early the next day we took TRAVELING STAR into town to refuel, returned to the anchorage and went back into Mahon in the dinghy to explore. There is a very large fleet of British yachts along the town key.



His tan was coming on but his girlfriend was already bronze

Dan bought some new genoa sheets which were reasonably priced, but bright yellow. In the afternoon we walked around 'La Mola'. The wind had increased to a force seven from the North West. If it didn't ease we would have the opportunity to take the official tour of the fort the next day.



Southern Sardinia

As it was, the wind eased and the next day we said goodbye to the Balearics and Spain. We covered the two hundred plus miles to South West Sardinia in 38 hours, pushed by strong winds, from the right direction, and enticed ever Eastwards by the dolphins that played around the bow. Our destination was Carloforte on the island of San Pietro. It was a tricky entrance in the dark, aggravated by the regular ferries to the mainland. The Harbour is well protected, being located on the Eastern side of the island and has an extensive man made harbour wall. Dan decided not to risk the pontoons in the dark, as he was worried about getting a pick up buoy around the propeller. So we anchored and gratefully fell asleep to the snap, crackle and pop of fish eating weed off the hull. We were glad of the shelter as the wind became very strong in the night and remained so the next day when we went ashore. The

town was buzzing. At first I thought that the Island had a large blind community or that our visit had coincided with the annual reunion of the Elvis and Roy Orbison Eyewear Appreciation Society. However, it turned out that the latest Italian fashion is for large single lens sunglasses. It being a Saturday, all the spare old men had been rounded up and put on a bench in the main square. You could take one home for as little as one hundred Euro.



Some old men

The architecture and atmosphere was very different to Spain. The narrow balconied streets were strung with washing nicely smoked by the continuous stream of scooters passing underneath. Having raided the local supermarket, we returned to TRAVELING STAR for lunch, but strong winds and a rain squall put paid to our plans to leave that day. The town was equally as busy in the evening. We dined out on pizza and ice cream.

We awoke to a day washed clear by the heavy overnight rain. The temperature had been steadily dropping since we left Ibiza. Dan had told me not to bring warm clothes as it would be really hot. Not that I could carry much as my meagre luggage allowance had been consumed by various boat bits. My only solution to keeping warm was to wear the clothes I had in layers. I wondered how many pairs of underpants I could get on before movement(s) became difficult! Unfortunately the wind had left with the rain. The very light breeze was from the North East, but predicted to go North West. Dan spotted some dust clouds on the shore which, on closer examination with binoculars, turned out to be Italian tanks practicing their reverse manoeuvres. As our next leg was to Sicily, and not wishing to motor all the way, we put into Port Nou Teulada at the Southern end of Sardinia, which would give us a good departure point when the wind became more favourable. This was a purpose built marina, our first such berth since leaving Ibiza. We docked very neatly despite the mariner shouting at us incomprehensibly from the pontoon, (mama mia!).

The marina was still half finished in spite of the glossy brochure. When it finally stopped raining we went on an expedition to the nearby campsite shop. The campsite was mainly occupied by Austrians and Germans. We didn't mention it or stride out. Keeping a weather eye on the large dogs, that resided on every other pitch, we raided the shop for cakes and other bad weather comfort food. In the evening we watched a French film that had no story but had been well received at Cannes. It was only the continuity errors that kept our attention.

In the morning the initially favourable wind eventually headed us, so we tacked back to the Southern most part of Sardinia, anchoring in the Bay of Villasimius. We had sailed

60 miles and knocked 40 miles off our track to Sicily in 12 hours. We didn't go ashore but dined well on chops followed by a German 'art' film of which we only watched the first half before boredom set in and we went to bed.



Northern Sicily

Another early start to a no wind day. We motored on a track of 099 degrees on a 140 mile leg to Trapani in Sicily. Dan took advantage of the calm conditions and got his rod out and stuck it over the side for all the fish to see. Half an hour later we spotted a pilot whale which would have been an interesting test of his boat jumble reel and line. At 10:15 Dan spotted an orange two person beach kayak. We spent a merry time working out how to stow it on the deck. With no wind, and the engine thrumming, we were glad to be out of the cockpit. All we needed to find now was a paddle. Playing with the cruising chute kept us amused for another hour or so until eventually, in the afternoon, the wind filled in. The wind died just before 21:00. It was a very clear night and, due to us being so far from land, there were more stars out strutting their stuff than hopeless optimists clutching worthless pieces of paper on the evening of a National Lottery double rollover. In the wee hours the waning moon scared most of them away. The Great Bear slugged it out until our friendly neighbourhood star sent him back into his cave. I didn't mourn his departure as I needed the Sun. It's always coldest just before the dawn. Land was sighted 50 miles away in the early light.

I have never known it take so long to approach a coast. From sighting land to entering the harbour took 12 hours. This was because the headland was some 1,110 metres high. Even when the rock was close enough to fill the view finder of a cheap camera, the houses that nestled around the lower slopes were as visible as flies on a dung heap. A large dung heap viewed from within smelling distance.



Light house, (44 metres), dwarfed by escarpment

The harbour was hidden by a 70 metre high plateau and could only be seen when you were close in. Trapani is a busy seaside town with an over capacity of restaurants for early June. After looking at the Moorish Church, our thoughts turned to our stomachs. On the main drag we were approached by waiters who thrust menu flyers in our hands. We ended up in a restaurant with a waiter from

Wolverhampton. We had the 12 Euro meal, but ended up with a bill for 46 Euro. It must have been the drink!

The next day there was no wind. We motored past Palermo, the island's capital, and anchored outside Porticello Harbour. I tried out the kayak and got a wet derriere for my trouble. The sit on kayak was more self filling than self bailing. We took the dinghy into the harbour which had fishing boats three deep, a good thing we hadn't tried to get in. After pizza we returned to TRAVELING STAR to find that she was rolling so badly that we had no choice but to go into the harbour and moor alongside a fishing boat. On lifting the anchor I was given the present of a complete fishing net.



Italian boat; possibly used for fishing

At the end of the harbour wall were the bins where the fish ends were disposed of. It stunk so high you would have needed a step ladder to just see over it. We didn't get much sleep due to the constant toing and froing of working boats. Perhaps we would have been better off spending the night with a swell.

At 0615 we had a lovely light head wind. We decided to motor 10 miles to Terminal Imerose. By the time we got there the wind had eased so we continued another 15 miles to Cefalu, and anchored in the old harbour with a Swedish boat for company. The skipper of a French boat made rolling movements with his hands before anchoring near us. He must have seen us outside the harbour at Trepani. I went snorkelling and found our anchor resting on its side. I reset it and, for curiosity, swam over to the Swedes. Unsurprisingly their anchor was perfectly dug in. Cefalu is a medieval town with narrow cobbled streets of balconied houses whose occupants chat to each other over your head. The local pastime is driving your Fiat backwards up the streets at high speed without hitting anyone or anything. Some of the drivers were very skilful. Must have been army trained. Two slices of pizza and two beers with a view across the old harbour: 5 euros.



Traveling Star anchored in Cefalu Old Harbour

We set off that night at 2100 as the Easterly wind seemed to be easing. It was one of those days where you can't seem to stop, passing Cape d'Orlando, Cape Milazzo and, by 1300 the next day passing through the Straits of Messina. We'd been motoring for most of the day so it seemed prudent to stop for fuel in the Marina at Reggio di Calabria on the mainland side of the Straits. It was very crowded and the Northerly wind, that had blown us down the Straits, would have pinned us to the fuel berth. We turned around and exited. Genoa unfurled, engine off, but when Dan put the engine back in gear to stop the propeller from turning, it didn't. Dan got a bit oily and discovered that the damper plate between the engine and the gearbox had sheared its bolts leaving the stubs in the flywheel.

Dan decided to sail to Greece to get it fixed. At this precise moment the wind became as effective as a fishnet sail. At dinner time I threw the remains of a lettuce overboard. During dessert it slowly overtook us waving a withered leaf in smug defiance. By dusk it had gained 30 feet on us. When a light breeze sprang up it naturally headed us before veering. We put the cruising chute up and managed a 24 hour run of 53 miles. Wind wise, things went from bad to worse. We even had to change the sheets on the cruising chute for lighter line to help it fly. It took us five days to cover the 240 miles to Preveza. On the last morning I came on watch at midnight with 11 miles to go. We were becalmed until 0215, but by 0400 when Dan took over, we had only 6 miles to go. I had only been in my bunk half an hour when I was awoken by Dan shouting "We're being headed". We quickly snuffed the chute and launched the dinghy. It took us four and a half hours to tow TRAVELING STAR into harbour. We anchored off the Town Quay and pulled her stern in with a line taken ashore with the dinghy. In the last 24 hour run we had covered 37 miles with a half knot current in our favour.

We were 1060 miles and 23 days from Ibiza and I didn't dare contemplate the state of my Mother's lawn. It was time, time to fly home.



Waiting for the tide Preveza

Epilogue

Dan got the engine repaired within two weeks and adopted a kitten and named her Pearson.

Cruising 2007

John Langrick

We have had a number of excellent cruises this year with many new members joining us to share the adventure. If I have to single out just one, it has to be the Fambridge meet where we had the best turnout ever, completely packing the 'inner sanctum' of the Ferry boat. Below are just a few of pictures from this event.



John Wittingham and Rodney Chopin in TREGEGALE



The packed jetty at Fambridge (on a windy day)



This was the most boats ever seen on the jetty at Fambridge



Nigel in familiar pose (beer in hand).



Destaye was a later arrival



The race back, LOTUS EATER and PHILOMELLE



John Martin with his new 'toy'



Heather McDowell and Paul Williams, in SAMARA the eventual winner of the race home.



Remember fitting out?



*Well, we all have to do it again next year!
Please let John Langrick know your laying up plans ASAP*