



Roach Sailing Association

www.paglesham.org.uk/rsa

September 2008 Newsletter

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Rodney Choppin

Still to come.....



All the John's! Fitting out 2008

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

Laying Up Supper

The Laying Up Supper will be at the Brandy Hole Yacht Club this year on Sat 22nd November

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 Poole's 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

The rate for the meal of £15 per person and details of the menu are as follows:

-00o-
Melon - A1
Prawn Cocktail - A2
Vegetable Soup - A3
-00o-
Vegetarian Lasagne - B1
Roast Lamb - B2
Poached Haddock - B3
-00o-
Apple and Raisin Crumble - C1
Peach Melba - C2
Cheese and biscuits - C3
-00o-
Tea or Coffee

-00o-

Richard has kindly again agreed to take the reservations for this and cheques should be sent to him and payable to the Roach Sailing Association at the address below and note we will need to know your menu options.

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

For example, Julie and I will have Prawn Cocktail and Soup, followed by Roast Lamb and Haddock. For sweet we will have Apple and Raisin Crumble and Peach Melba. Hence we will have:

Meal for two:
A2,A3
B2, B3
C1,C2

Bosun's Corner

RSA Members get certified (ICC)

I left IMOTHESES in the water this year and this enabled 16 of our members to take the ICC offshore training and gain an RYA certificate. Colin Campbell took a further four on his boat Magic Motion, which makes 20 in all. Further training for the Inland Waterways part of the test CEVNI, saw a total of 24 members at two sessions. The first course thanks to the South Woodham Ferrers Yacht Club for accommodation and the second 'Chez Jon Walmsley'. Well done to all and thanks again to our instructor Doug McEwan from the South Woodham Ferrers Yacht Club. If any other members would like to take this course, please let me know, but we have none planned currently.

Haul Out 2008

We are hauling out on the last week in October and the first week in November. Please let John Langrick know what date would suit best as you will know we like to coordinate three boats per day. I will be laying IMOTHESES up at Carters and SWANTI at Paglesham.
01702 589863
07740 839410
johnlangrick@aol.com

Gordon's Patch

Paglesham Village Trust have raised over £6,000 towards the purchase of the Oyster Pits (aka Gordon's Patch), and hope to raise enough to complete the purchase in the autumn, and put the Jetty in order during the winter. This is a unique opportunity to obtain a piece of riverside for the use and enjoyment of the villagers and river users.

Thanks go to many RSA members who have contributed, and we hope that more will help us to reach the target. If you would like to donate using Gift Aid, please fill in enclosed Gift Aid form.

Donations can also be paid direct to PVT and sent to the Treasurer, David Whittingham, Cobblers Row, Paglesham (but please note that direct payments to PVT cannot attract gift aid).

PVT will be writing to all contributors in October with a progress update.

West System

For many years I have advocated the use of WEST SYSTEM and over those years many of our members have benefited from its use. Certainly with a wooden boat like SWANTI, it has prevented me carrying out 'serious surgery' on many occasions. The key benefit I use is the fact that rotten pieces of wood, for example in the corner of the dog-house on SWANTI, can be restored to a strength even greater than original by first drying out the area thoroughly and then soaking in West SYSTEM.

When dried, the result is that the wood is now impervious to water and the rot is cured. Any gaps can be filled with the same West system with appropriate additives such as microfibres and then sanded down.

Among those who have benefited are our Chairam Rdney and a seam in the cabin side on HALLOWEEN, a crack in the deck trim on the ster of John Wittingham's TREAGLE.

Alan Holland's RUTH had her decks laminated with 6mm marine ply which was adhered to the pine deck with West System. The deck was then coated in fibre glass matting and West System. The result has been an entirely dry cabin.



RUTH – Back to the water in the spring of 2008

We used West System extensively in preparing DESTAYE for her 'round the UK cruise', in fact probably more west than wood!



DESTAYE, getting ready for her cruise.

EVA ANNIE had some extensive rot in the top strake earlier in the year and this we cured with West System and filled with the same system mixed with Microfibres.



Before



Repair done, just needs sanding

Simon's new boat BRIAR ROSE used West System extensively during her restoration and is now back in the water looking (and sailing) fantastic.



Mike Dallimore assists Simon at the re-launch of BRIAR ROSE

I still have plenty of West System left if any members would like to use it this winter. Please do let me know.

I have to say a big thanks to our local West System representative who kindly donated the product that has kept many of us afloat this year. It should also be noted that there are courses run on the use of this miraculous compound and I would recommend any member attending.

Paglesham Village Show

The RSA had a stand at this year's Paglesham show in order to increase the awareness of activities of the RSA to the villagers and also try and get more financial support for purchase of Gordon's Patch. We had a good deal of interest in this and the boats we had on the stand. Thanks to Heather for bringing MINI (her minisail), John Smith of the Hostellers for bringing his dinghy and I brought along STELLA MARIE.



Josephine shows the kids (including Ken) how it's done!

We inflated a rubber dinghy and filled it with water so that kids could make model boats out of an assortment of corks, cocktail sticks, straws and rubber bands. A great time was had by all and thanks to the rest of the RSA members who came to see us.

DESTAYE's progress

You may remember DESTAYE has been circumnavigating the UK with skipper Shaun Heatherington having a succession of family as crew. I also recently joined Shaun for a memorable trip from Penzance to the Isles of Scilly and then back along the South Coast to Torquay. Shaun is now on the return leg and with quite a story to tell. You can find details of DESTAYE's journey to date by looking at the web page :

<http://destaye.blog.co.uk>

We will include a summary in the next newsletter, but suffice to say for the moment, well done Shaun and DESTAYE and family!

Yard News

The yard has still no buyers and we are planning for next year with Steve Adams in charge. Steve has proved to be a great manager of the yard and I have every confidence that good relationships will continue.

The shed modifications have proved to be a great success and also Dally has been performing well throughout the season. We will shortly be seeing a new toilet block installed, a welcome relief!

For next year Steve is going to allocate and cordon off a dinghy park in front of our shed where we can all easily store our dinghies. Can you please ensure that your boat name is clearly marked on your dinghy.



The 'DALLY' work party in spring 2008. Thanks to all who helped get her back in the water

Racing Update

Richard Bessey

We have had a couple of races in light airs this year, but they were very much the exception. Two races were blown out, and we will try to fit an extra event in before the end of the season. But the competition has been good, and we've had some exciting sailing in seven races completed so far. ULABELLA has a

strong lead in the series, IMOTHE and SAMARA are contending for second place (but still with a chance of getting ahead). Open boats are strong again, with 7 boats in the Paglesham Yacht Race, so we are looking forward the Lifeboat Cup.

Further afield, GLAYVA has completed yet another Jester Challenge, this time sailing to the Azores (and back). MOONDANCER represented the RSA in Burnham Week with excellent results, and we hear that MAGIC MOTION has been seen on the race circuit too.

Paglesham Gentlemen's Cruise 2008 - SLOG

David Hanchett

Avid readers of this Newsletter may well have been wondering what form the above 2008 cruise took; who was there; where did they go and why it is called the Paglesham Gentlemen's Cruise. Mostly, however, readers will be indifferent, and will readily be forgiven if their heartfelt response to the questions raised above is "Who cares"?

The job of this article is to try to let you know what the cruise is about and what those that take part in it expect to get out of it. There must be something since, in its current form, this is the second year that the stately "HALLOWE'EN" and the ever-persevering "MARSHMALLOW" (memories of the Rev W V Awdry's Duchess and Thomas, sort of spring to mind) and their intrepid skippers and crews have set off from Paglesham for a week of merriment.



HALLOWE'EN

First, why is it called the "Gentlemen's Cruise"? The really short answer is that I have no idea since there is no rule that women can't come along (indeed as I write the Chairman of the Association and skipper of "Hallowe'en" is already considering an application for 2009 from one Ms Tawny Peaks* sometime of Woodbridge). And it certainly has nothing to do with class or background (even pirates from Bristol ** can

be included). On the other hand the title seems to be generated by the general wish of all participants to do things at a leisurely pace, to avoid night sailing and early morning starts (although see entry below for Wednesday 16th July 2008) and to eat and drink well outside of Government recommended limits.

So if that is the sort of thing that appeals, this annual jaunt could be for you.

* Peaks gained notoriety all over the world in 1998 for winning a case against a Florida physical therapist who sued her, claiming that he suffered from whiplash because she swung her breasts into his face whilst dancing at a club his friends had taken him to for his stag night. The man said that her breasts were hard like cement blocks. The case was eventually tried under arbitration procedure with former New York City Mayor, Ed Koch, sitting as arbitrator. After having Peaks appraised by a female bailiff, Koch ruled in favour of Peaks, saying that the breasts were not dangerous. She retired in 1999. In 2005 she sold her breast implants on eBay.

** Ivor's crew lives in Bristol

Enjoyment is the name of the game, and I see that I ended the first paragraph with the word "merriment". Perhaps to give you a flavour of the sort of merriment which abounds I can reprint something which we found in a book purchased at Wolverstone chandlers, which had us rolling in the aisles on several occasions (the obvious one being the first time we saw it and all other occasions being when it was referred to by one of our number after several pints of Adnams or IPA). Here goes: -

In the early part of WWII, Wrens were trying to buy up all available stocks of Navy serge with which to make themselves trousers. It is said that in response to this a C-in-C felt it necessary to set priorities and sent the following signal-

"Wrens clothing is to be held up until the needs of seagoing personnel have been satisfied"



MARSHMALLOW

Second, who went? Well probably the two boats, "HALLOWE'EN" and "MARSHMALLOW" and their respective skippers (Rodney Choppin and Ivor Jones) need little or no introduction to Roach Sailing Association members. Rodney's crew was formed by Paglesham men John Whitingham and Robin Slater and Ivor had the misfortune of having on board your humble scribe who (although having first sailed the Roach and surrounding waters in "MARSHMALLOW" over 33 years ago) lives in Bristol and keeps a boat (nearly two) on the Torridge in Devon.

I am bound, purely out of personal nostalgia, to recall a cruise undertaken in 1975 with Ivor in "MARSHMALLOW" and involving other Roach members; John and Simon Martin ("ZELIA"), Reg Seal ("DORMOUSE"), the late Dick Churn ("FORFAR") and others when we sailed similar waters and frequented familiar hosteries (including the legendary Butt and Oyster at Pinmill) I record here my thanks to Ivor, Rodney and John for indulging me in such moments of happy nostalgia this year when we again drank in the Butt and Oyster, albeit that we did it from the comfort of Wolverstone Marina rather than arriving at Pinmill in a little fleet of tenders which somehow and quite unexplainably, got mislaid by the tide whilst we were in the pub.

This said we return to 2008 and to my third topic – where we went.

We start by considering Saturday 12th July, about midday when Ivor and I started to load up "MarshMallow" for the trip. Rodney and John had "Hallowe'en" on the mud just in front of the shed for some scrubbing. Rodney called across "David, I have a very nice little book which I would like you to use to record the events of the cruise. You don't have to be very technical, just try and produce something more by way of a sailing blog or log – shall we call it a "Slog"? " And with that myfeat as your pressed scribe was sealed. Only you (and time) will tell if this is a "Slog" as Rodney instructed and, if it is, whether such a document has any place in maritime history and culture . I have allowed myself to wonder if we are on to something!

Saturday 12th July 2008

"MarshMallow" under staysail to Branklet in fresh NW 4/5 (this is about as technical as it gets folks), arriving about an hour ahead of Rodney and John in "Hallowe'en." On route passed several flotillas of the "Romford Navy" and inwardly thought that the additional tax on diesel might, after all, have some advantages. Anchored for the night and ate on board and I was reminded of the relative limitations imposed by a single burner Taylors' stove. I did not sleep well as I was woken by the sound of the boat swinging round on the anchor chain and I looked urgently out of the porthole asking myself if I had indeed let out enough chain (Ivor had instructed 7 fathoms) and

what would be the consequences had I not. You get my drift? Fortunately we didn't.

Sunday 13th July 2008

Both boats set of together in light air at around 7.45am (you will notice the use of the more land-friendly clock. This is so that non-sailing partners will understand it). Reached the Outer Crouch at 10.00am when the wind picked up a bit to around NW3 (which is Hampstead isn't it?). Anyway whether it is or it isn't I thought it might be my cue to introduce another story from the same Wolverstone book that we found funny. I hope you like it. It concerns the "driver" of a powerboat who found himself in difficulties and phoned up the Coast Guard.

Coastguard *What is your position?*
Man *My position?*
Coastguard *Essential that I know your position*
Man *I am the managing Director of an IT company in the midlands.*

We passed the Sunken Buxey and "Marshmallow" began to "Motor- Sail" past Walton. I was not sure whether it was the "in thing" to motor sail. I had asked my skipper why he was prepared to motor- sail now but resisted such a practice all those years ago. His reply was quite simple, "That's because the *Stuart Turner I had then wouldn't start!*"

But on my return to pirate land (Bristol) I consulted my bible, "Hand Reef and Steer" by Tom Cunliffe and in amongst all his usual useful tips and wrinkles about what to do when your baggywrinkles are getting old and causing chaffing and when and how to apply that extra bit of necessary pressure to your deadeye prior to bringing up, I found this:-

"There's no dishonour about motor sailing. After all, we tow our propellers around the ocean. Uncomplaining we suffer their dreadful drag and we tolerate the raising of our centres of gravity. We may as well extract the benefit when we need it. So drop the staysail, sheet the main amidships and the storm jib as hard as it'll go without ripping the clew. Now select "half ahead" and watch the lee shore disappear astern. You can't beat a touch of the "iron topsail".

Well good. Years of writing reports when a civil servant has taught me that if "no dishonour" is written we can get away with interpreting this as meaning "it is very honourable". Or in plain New Labour-eese "We see it as our duty to serve all of the people in all of our communities by engaging with motor-sailing whenever and wherever possible"

Ivor had sort of embraced this concept. He had his own intellectual interpretation of the activity. It goes something like this. *Whilst motor-sailing (if you've got a good motor) may not be wrong, it is not wholly*

right either. Therefore when done it shall be done with the control set at "economy drive" only. For those of us that were students at red-brick or white - tile establishments (Ivor was, on the other hand, at Oxford) this is somewhat akin to sitting in your bedsit huddled round the gas fire set at "Miser Rate" and when applied to sailing it means that whilst you will eventually get there you won't do it very quickly. And when applied to the 2008 cruise it means that you won't arrive until well after "HALLOWE'EN" and (and this is the real rub) until her crew have sunk at least the first pint. Anyway the term of "Doing an Ivor" sprung in to being, meaning motor-sailing at slow speed to save the motor and effect the best economy of fuel.

Anyway, and whatever your own personal feelings about motor-sailing, motor-sailing slowly or just going for it, both boats were safety anchored in the Stour at Ewarton Ness by late afternoon. And we did so with great anticipation that it was the first Sunday and that meant we were all invited aboard "HALLOWE'EN" for dinner and the delicious and legendary "Paglesham Pie" which is kindly and skilfully made by the skipper's dear lady. Whatever offerings or contributions you can take along in the way of Cornish Yarg or Chateau bottled claret the main and most delicious part of the meal remains the Paglesham Pie. And this year it was vintage! So a delicious meal was had by all and another tradition of the Gentlemen's Cruise was enjoyably despatched. Thank you Annie. (and by the way the mint for the new potatoes was a lovely touch).

Monday 14th July 2008

Left Ewarton at around 10.30 and motored towards Shotley where "HALLOWE'EN" was waiting the return of her skipper who was in the tender bringing supplies of diesel in the event of further "full steam ahead" motor sailing. The wind had blown up fresher but Rodney's new 2.5HP Suzuki was purring along with power to spare. Supplies safely on board the two boats enjoyed a good sail up the Orwell, under the road bridge at Ipswich and back to Wolverstone Marina.

Already at the Marina was Penny (Quilliam) and her husband Alexander whom we later met at the Butt and Oyster, which is approached from Wolverstone by that lovely walk through the woods.

Very noticeably there are fewer barges and interesting old boats at Pinmill than there were 33 years ago, but the place is still very charming. At least we saw a Finesse and a (possible) Dauntless and a few "old boys" still sit in the corner of the Butt and Oyster, where at least, and mercifully, they have not yet installed carpets and the memory of "A young Lady called Bianca" still lives in the nooks and crannies of eternity.

"There was a young lady called Bianca

Who fell asleep whilst at anchor
She woke up dismayed
When she heard the mate say
Let's haul up the mainbrace and spanker."

Tuesday 15th July 2008

We woke up at Wolverstone Marina to an overcast day and winds of force 3 or 4, but also the arrival of Cruise Member Robin Slater. Robin had been brought by car having attended the graduation ceremony of his daughter at London University (St Mary's) on Monday and a well earned celebratory family meal. (Many congratulations to Elise who is now studying for the bar). Anyway the Fab Four had, with Robin's arrival, become the Famous Five and we set off for the Walton Backwaters refreshed and very pleased to have Robin with us.

Arrived at Walton around 4.45pm and Rodney's outboard sprung in to action powering not only his own tender with himself, John and Robin aboard, but also towing Ivor and myself behind in "MARSHMALLOW's" rubber dinghy so that we could all go ashore at Titchmarsh and spend the evening in the Harbour Lights.

Wednesday 16th July 2008

Those of you that persevered manfully (or womanfully) through the opening paragraphs of this "Slog" will have seen that the Paglesham's Gentlemen's Cruise doesn't do early starts. Well in theory it doesn't, but there have to be exceptions and, as we all know rules are there to be broken. So this day we got off by 5.30am ahead of low water at 5.45am so that we could be helped out of the Backwaters and pushed up the Colne to Brightlingsea. We had a good sail in winds freshening to 5 and were ashore at Brightlingsea by lunchtime for a pint in the Colne Yacht Club. Some stores purchased and the key to the Yacht Club's showers secured, we returned to the boats for a rest before running ashore later for a few drinks at the "Yachtsmans" and a good meal at the Indian before returning to "HALLOWE'EN" for some drinks and yarns. (The generosity of the skipper of the bigger boat in this regard did not and should not, go unnoticed).

Thursday 17th July 2008

Overnight it rained and we woke not only to the sound of scrap metal being loaded onto the coaster that was moored below the yacht club, but also to the sound of rain on the coach-roof. But by 8.30 we were underway to Maylandsea, inspired by and enthusiastic at the prospect of visiting the yard where Robin's Brixham trawler "Our Boy" is being restored. She was brought round by sea from Devon by a crew of Roach men and has been undergoing repairs at Maylandsea in the skilled care of Robin's son, Toby. Quite how this young man has honed such skills in such a short space of time defies rational explanation,

but the facts speak for themselves. Toby has turned from enthusiastic amateur to craftsman and in so doing has effectively saved (and with financial help and enthusiasm from his father: well isn't that what dads' are for?) the life of this beautiful boat and gained the admiration and respect of all those that have been privileged to inspect his work. If the Paglesham Cruise were in the business of making an award for outstanding work it would go to Toby Slater. But we don't, so I will pass swiftly on to our arrival at West Mersea at about 4pm.

Here there is good news, and not so good news. "HALLOWE'EN" arrived and picked up a buoy and "MARSHMALLOW" laid alongside. Calls were made to the West Mersea Yacht Club who would be pleased to entertain us for drinks, but Thursday was the day they did not serve evening meals. This will be noted for all future years. However, after an enjoyable few jars in the Yacht Club, the barmaid made some recommendations. Amongst those that are both relevant and repeatable she advised us to eat at the "Coast Inn" which is just a couple of minutes walk from the Yacht Club. And it was a good recommendation as the food was first class and "The Coast Inn" is recommended if you ever find yourself in West Mersea on a Thursday evening.

But, and it is a sad reflection on standards, whilst we were ashore somebody decided to "borrow" the oars from Rodney's tender (even though they were tied in) to do a spot of sculling practice. Although when this felony was discovered the next day Rodney and Robin returned to the public jetty and recovered one oar; the other was never seen again. Just as well then that John had earlier presented Rodney with a fine pair of oars, which he had following the sale of "TREAGLE" at the beginning of the season. It is anticipated that these will be well secured by metal clamps and brackets ahead of the 2009 cruise! But to have oars stolen in West Mersea, of all places....

Friday 18th July

We left West Mersea at 9.00am en route to North Fambridge. "HALLOWE'EN" put in an unscheduled stop for stores at Burnham and for this paid the price of missing the last inside pontoon mooring at North Fambridge. But being the bigger boat and bearing in mind that the run ashore at Burnham had embraced a pub lunch they didn't much care and, on the whole felt that theirs was the best lot. And that is hard to deny.

There are two delights in North Fambridge. One is called George and the other Brenda Jago, both Elder Gaffers in their own right and both encyclopædias of knowledge about older boats and this part of Essex, which has always been their home. Now from their delightful cottage at North Fambridge they continue to enjoy the river and keep in touch with everything "Old Gaffer", and are chronicling life. This last point is a literal reference to the fact that they are about to publish a book about Brenda's family, which hails

from Foulness. Expect them to appear on Jonathan Ross' show in the autumn to promote it!

We enjoyed their company at supper at the Ferryboat Inn and afterwards enjoyed some tales over a drink with them and with Dick Morris who was also around at North Fambridge, from Australia where he and boat now live.

George and Brenda's former boat "JANTY" is still kept (by her new owners) at North Fambridge. She is a very pretty little Deben 4 tonner and, as George and Brenda were the first to comment, it is a great credit to her new owners that they have worked hard on her over the winter and are now using her regularly.

Saturday 19th July

The winds had not declined overnight and there was some rain. We decided to stay for lunch at North Fambridge and then go into Yokesfleet for the night and to eat up all left -overs (and drink up any liquids thus making the departure from the boats on Sunday all the easier). We bombed down the Crouch under staysail with wind and tide and started the engines on entering the Roach at about 3.45pm.

To assist galley operations and to avoid having to use the tender or swim, "MARSHMALLOW" laid alongside "HALLOWE'EN" at anchor in Yokesfleet and stores were pooled to make a large but unorthodox supper aboard "HALLOWE'EN". Would Rick Stein or Jamie Oliver have ever thought how good egg, bacon, fried bread, baked beans, potatoes, chilli con carne and Waitrose tinned Irish stew would taste if served on the same plate with "mature" Jarg and Stilton? And if that doesn't sound like culinary heaven to you, the whole manoeuvre was washed down with 5 bottles of wine which had been lurking in Rodney's locker for too long and finished off with a slice of fine homemade fruit cake (thank you Sue) and several glasses of Robert Watson rum (a brand of Tobago Demerara rum particular to the skipper of "MARSHMALLOW"). Then with "HALLOWE'EN's" original oil lamp, as specified by her original owner Commander Len Choppin and fitted by Frank Shuttlewood, pressed into service we yarnded and chatted into the small hours. This may not have been everybody's perfect evening but one struggles to consider what might have improved it materially. Perhaps the news that Tawny Peaks had come out of retirement, shed thirty years and relocated to Paglesham East End and opened an oyster bar where you could dance to the music of Procol Harem whilst drinking Adnams?

Sunday 20th July 2008

Returned to Paglesham and each boat to her mooring. Came ashore with kit. Annie was waiting and filling her time collecting sea lavender to be dried for the Harvest Festival. Things go on and we have to be thankful that as one happy cruise finishes other events and other beacons flash. Such is life.

Conclusion and Finale

I hope this has given you the flavour of the 2008 Cruise and maybe, just maybe, it has whetted your appetite to join us in 2009. It is a report assembled by one but contributed to by all. That's how we do things, for amongst the sailing and the boats and the seamanship and the yarns and the grub and the grog lurks a binding focus of comradeship and merriment. I see that with the use of that word "merriment" I too have brought this "Slog" full circle. So that's it; finito; The End

Finale

On the pre-war China Station, when Navy ships had no laundries, an earnest Flag Lieutenant was concerned about the Admiral's washing and sent this signal to the Port Captain.

Please send Admiral's woman on board

Understandably this caused some consternation ashore and the signal was queried. A hurried correction was sent from the flagship:

Reference my signal, please insert washer between Admiral and woman.

PHILOMELLE in France 2008

Richard and Justine Bessey

Mon 21st July

PHILOMELLE's hull was shot-blasted and epoxy-painted in the early summer at Brandy Hole. The work included 13 steel patches, strengthening of the foot of the door arch (which supports the mast), and extensive stripping out and painting of the interior hull. Final fitting out was done at Sutton Wharf, and we were ready (ish) to set off on the afternoon tide in company with IMOTHESES. A good following wind took us to the Sunk beacon, thence through Fishermans Gat and across to North Foreland. As the light faded the wind became lighter and more southerly, and we tacked out before heading in to Ramsgate at around 1am (IMOTHESES having arrived over an hour before).



Tuesday

After breakfast we debated our destination in France and agreed on Dunkirk. IMOTHEES took the northern route whilst PHIOMELLE went south around the Goodwins. Somewhere inside the SW Goodwin buoy, we heard a clatter from the engine which sounded serious, so we decided not to run it except for entering port. The SE wind was favourable and we made good progress until the tide slackened and the wind lightened towards the evening. However we arrived in time to join Imothes for supper.

Wednesday

After listening to our engine via the mobile phone, Mick Dallimore agreed there was a serious problem and it would probably need to be removed and stripped down for repair. The local engineers were reluctant, so we decided to sail home while the wind served. It would be risky to continue South with a dodgy engine as we would need it for entering harbours and for making progress in light or adverse winds. After lunch together at the YC Mer-de-Nord, we said goodbye to IMOTHEES and her crew, and set off on the last of the south-going tide to take us round the sands. During the night we crossed the shipping in clear conditions, and at dawn were approaching the Fishermans Gat once again.

Thursday

We sailed on up to Rochford, and motored the last bit to come alongside the quay. The yard had kindly provided a hole for PHIOMELLE to settle in, and as the tide settled, Mick had a look at the engine. It was unfortunately just out of warranty, and would clearly take at least a week to repair, probably longer. We decided to fit a new engine and deal with the repair later.

Friday

Fortunately Beta Marine had an engine available, so we drove to Gloucester to pick it up. Meanwhile Mick removed the faulty engine with help from Nigel and the digger. We returned in the late afternoon, and set about fitting the new engine, which was all running and ready that evening.

Our special thanks to Mick Dallimore for something like a record pit-stop engine replacement! A post mortem on the old engine proved that an exhaust valve had broken and part of it had punched a hole in the piston. This engine will be reconditioned and kept as a spare or sold.

Saturday

We spent the Saturday morning tying up loose ends at home, and replenishing supplies.

We went off on the Saturday afternoon tide with help from our RSA friends pulling PHIOMELLE out of her hole by the quay. The new engine was immediately put to the test, as we were concerned about getting neaped! Later we joined ULABELLA and LOTUS for an improvised dinner in Quay Reach

and anchored overnight before setting off to Ramsgate.

Sunday

On the morning tide, we set off again Slower progress this time, but had an uneventful trip and reached Ramsgate in the evening.

Monday 28th July

We set off early, with a fair wind for Boulogne. Crossing from Dover to Cap Griz-Nez, we had dolphins in our wake, but they were frightened off by a strange tapping on our hull. This we decided was one of the zinc anodes which had come loose and was flapping at anything over 6 knots! The sailing was very pleasant and we decided to sail on past Boulogne and get to Fecamp if possible. That night though, we had spectacular electrical storms, and the wind became rather less favourable.

Tuesday

By dawn the wind was getting quite strong and we were tacking West off Dieppe. Even when the tide became favourable, we made little progress due to the short choppy seas, so we decided to head in to port. This took several hours of hard work however.

Dieppe is of course mainly a ferry port and attracts a roudy crowd, both French and English. You can get any food you like, including "petit dejenez tous le jour". The harbour is in the centre of everything, but rather grim beset by floating rubbish. On the pier were probably over 100 anglers, mostly young men posing with their huge rods, jigging for mackerel. We saw one chap haul in five large fish on one line, and there were piles of caught fish on the quay.

Wednesday

We planned to sail on West, as there was a brief spell of Southerly weather. However on checking the engine, I found that the oil level was higher than expected. Sure enough some water had got in – almost certainly via the exhaust system while the engine was idle. After consulting Mick, I drained the oil, changed the filter, refilled it and ran the engine for a while before repeating the process. After another run, the oil appeared clean. From then on, we always turned off the water intake seacock a half-minute before stopping the engine, so that the exhaust system is cleared of any surplus water. The new engine was fine for the rest of the trip.

Thursday

Work on the engine had delayed our departure from Dieppe but we were on our way West again in a light SSW breeze and misty weather. It was a short day's sail to Fecamp with tall limestone cliffs all the way, villages clustered around each gap with its stony beach. In one place a large nuclear power station loomed. Fecamp has its port entrance round a corner in the cliffs, and there is a strong swell in the tidal part of the harbour. While we were there it was not too

bad, but we might have considered locking into the inner harbour in strong NW winds. In the evening we walked on the beach beneath towering white cliffs with wonderful flint layers, and a noisy colony of kittiwakes.



Friday

Harbour-bound with strong winds, we explored the town which is home to the Benedictine liqueur and a large ornate set of buildings associated with its production. The actual Benedictine abbey is in another part of town, and has nothing to do with strong drink. Later we walked on the cliff top, to find the locally ubiquitous German fortifications. These included huge foundation blocks for a radar lattice which fortunately was not yet working when the Normandy landings took place. On returning to the boat, I reluctantly took a dive and removed the flapping anode from Philomelle's hull. The water was clear, but rather cold!

Saturday

It was still blowing from the SW with frequent showers, but we decided to go on along the coast to the Seine entrance. Choices of destination included Le Havre (we prefer rural places), Hornfleur (attracted but getting there is complicated by tidal restrictions), and Ouistreham, which we selected as it is about the only port in the Bay de Seine that is accessible at all states of the tide. Our first tack took us NW until we could clear Cap d'Antifer on the SW tack. We also had to clear the huge tanker port which is built out into the sea just South of this cape. We had the ebb tide for some of this time, helping us to clear the shoals off the Seine entrance. It was dark and near HW when we arrived in Ouistreham. We edged past the submerged training walls and the unloading Portsmouth ferry, and circled gingerly in the dark near the lock gates. We were about to give up and moor outside when the gates opened and we entered a huge ship-lock. After a long wait we were issued into the canal, felt our way into a marina (no lights or signs) and tied up to a Dutch yacht.

Sunday

Rain and gales predicted for the next 2 days. We considered motoring up the canal to Caen, which is

done in convoy, but the journey would have been tedious so we stayed put, walked around the town, missing the Sunday morning market near the ferry port due to the usual lack of relevant local information, and planned a trip to Bayeux by bus for the next day.

Monday 4th August

Caught the bus and set off along the coast road, where every village has its wartime memorabilia deployed on roundabouts. Along the route were names remembered since the D-day landings, Aromanche where the Mulberry harbour was visible from the road above, and Courseulles with its memorial to Operation Juno. At Bayeux we walked around the ancient town, and stopped by a restored water-mill for a café lunch. We found the museum that houses the famous tapestry, and paid the €7.50 entry which was well worth while. The tapestry is displayed, as probably originally intended, as a wall-hanging, carefully lit to display the colours without damaging them. It is 70m long and at nearly 1,000 years old is in amazing condition. You get a personal recorded commentary to take with you, so each scene is interpreted. There is a film and exhibition to follow, putting it all in context.

Tuesday

A break in the weather was forecast so we did some last-minute shopping and set off North across Le Manche. To start with we motored in very light airs, and it was only during the following night that the SW breeze strengthened. We discovered how to use the inedible dry french sausage – thinly sliced and added to soup, it becomes quite delicious!

Wednesday,

Sighted St Catherine's Head light at around Dawn, and touched at Bembridge late that morning (this was in fact the only time we went aground this trip!). Clearly we were not going to get over the bar at less than half-tide, so we sailed across to Chichester Harbour instead. It was Cowes Week so the Solent was thick with sail, with the larger yachts spilling out around us. The tide took us up to Itchenor where we anchored below the moorings and dozed off. An evening excursion to the shore showed why the anchor was holding so well – thick mud below the pretty sand visible at high tide.



Thursday

We took the last of the ebb down to the East Head anchorage, near the harbour entrance, and went ashore to explore the dunes. When there was enough water to cross the bar, we set off in lovely sunny weather with a stiff SW wind, but it took over an hour to tack out against the tide. Then we set a course for the Looe Channel and the long haul East. We were prepared to sail on overnight but had little fuel, so as the wind faded we decided to stop over at Newhaven. The visitors berths here are awkward to get into because of the cross-tide, and the ferry docking just across the river is noisy.



Friday

We waited for the fuel berth in the morning, but nobody came to open up, so we sailed on regardless. A good NW wind took us on to Dover, fading as we approached, and we were just in time (8pm) to get fuel. We took the advice of the chap at the fuel berth (friendly and knowledgeable), to press on to Ramsgate before the next bout of weather. This took about four hours, motoring up against the ebb past Deal and through the shoaling Ramsgate Channel in the darkness (an interesting exercise).

Saturday

We paid our dues at Ramsgate in the morning and set off for Fisherman's Gat once again – very promptly with a weekend of strong westerlies on its way. We made good time and it was pleasant sailing until we had crossed the Sunk and turned West. At this point the SW gale started in earnest and the tide turned, and the rest of the way was something of a battle, although we continued to make progress with the flood tide. We arrived in Paglesham at around 5pm, rather wet but having had some great sailing over the past three weeks. It was a particular pleasure to arrive, finding Briar Rose had taken the next mooring, and getting immediate offers for help ashore from Simon and John.

Dances with Whales Or the view from my Garden Shed *John Apps*

This year the Jester Challenge was a voyage from Plymouth to Praia do Vittoria on the island of Terceira in the Azores. I was fairly confident I could make it to the Azores as it seemed to be the favorite place for repairs for the Jester fleet in the 2006 transatlantic attempt. So by booking early we were able to get some really cheap flights for my wife, Heather, to join me for a fortnight so that she could visit some of the exotic places I seem to get to by boat. For a couple of days before she arrived I made a special effort to clean up and put away for GLAYVA'S fairly important guest. Probably because of the excess of tools and spares I never use, Heather decided that GLAYVA was most other people's version of a garden shed. My personal bit of space in which I can escape from the rest of the world and even my family. Having pondered this comment for some weeks at sea, all I can say is that while GLAYVA may be my garden shed, I really enjoy the view.

Each ocean voyage I undertake has a defining moment it would seem. This year it was my contact with whales. Other years I have had whale sightings quite close to the boat. But they have been momentary and fleeting unlike the constant attention from the dolphins.



About 20 miles out of Praia on the way in I encountered a Sperm Whale who stuck with me off and on for about 3 hours. He would breech three times and then deep dive for about 15 minutes, breech three times and deep dive for 15 minutes. Sometimes he would come up on the port side and sometimes on the starboard. I was moving along at about 3.5 knots at the time and it was only when I sped up to 4.2 knots that he fell behind. However that only lasted about 20 mins and I dropped back to 2.8 knots and he caught me and passed me, shortly after that the wind died for another 12 hours and I went nowhere. Throughout the three hour contact I was thinking about tacking as I was heading WNW in a very light breeze and I wanted to go SW. However as the whale was breeching within 100 metres of the GLAYVA I was afraid to deviate from my course in case it was one of those times when he decided to breech to port just as I tacked. Encountering a whale so close is quite scary as there is no indication that the whale is aware of your presence unlike the dolphins who look you in the eye. And of course there are numerous stories of boats hitting

'sleeping' whales. Heather and I were invited for drinks aboard a Najad 49 while we were in the marina at Angra do Heroisme, the skipper an Austrian called Harald and his wife Beate were completing a world tour. Harald an electronics engineer claimed that the whales will react to your depth sounder and he always has two running [one on 200mhz and one on 150mhz]. My depth sounder is on the same circuit as my log so by default I leave mine on all the time as well.

However that was not GLAYVA'S last encounter with whales. On the way back I had a very light North Easterly all the way to Falmouth and once again doing 3.5 knots on a NNW tack I encountered a whole pod of Sperm Whales around the boat. They only stayed with me for one and a half hours this time but my best estimate of the numbers if they were all breeching at about the same time was five and I was truly surrounded at times.

I was very pleased that I was able to convince Heather to put up with the swell and chop long enough to make it to Lajes do Pico. This was one of the main whale catching towns in the Azores and had an old whaling factory that had been turned into a tourist attraction. On the way in we walked past the old concrete flensing ramp which made us both emotional to think of the whales being drawn up the ramp by winches and could imagine the blood running down into the surf.



However the sort of boats that the Baleiros [whalers] used to catch the sperm whale made it a fair fight in some ways. They sailed or rowed these boats about 10 miles off shore where the deep channels are where you find the whales. Harpooned the whales and dragged them back to the flensing ramp. An old b&w movie of the harpooning was shown and it was fairly obvious that only a great deal of skill and some luck saved the Baleiros. On the sea wall enclosing the new marina at Lajes do Pico is a memorial to all the Baleiros who died, almost as sad as the flensing ramp.



Baleiros memorial is the wall with the curved top on the left. The mountain is Pico. Pico is the tallest mountain in Portugal and rises straight from the sea. It is about the same height as Mt Kosciusko, Australia's tallest mountain; but much more impressive as it doesn't sit on top of a mountain range. It is said that it controls the weather in mid Atlantic and it is unusual to be able to catch it completely clear of cloud.



The place Heather and I enjoyed the most was Angra do Heroisma which describes itself as the oldest city in the new world. When Portugal was under Spanish rule, Angra do Heroisma was one of the stops that the treasure ships coming out of Havana made.

I love the names Angra do Heroisma [Cove or Bay of Heroes] and Praia do Vitoria [Beach of Victory] on Terceira both commemorating early attempts to stop the Spanish resting control of the Azores from Portugal.



The only other island we visited other than Terceira and Pico was Sao Jorge, famous for its cheese and very rugged when viewed from the sea. I had wanted to take Heather to Flores, however her sea legs were not up for the distance of 200 nautical miles.

Another Leviathan

One Picaninny dawn on the way back I emerged into the cockpit to check the horizon and saw what I thought was an oil platform some miles off to the Southeast. I did a double take as the depth was about 3000 metres checked my kitchen timer to see if it was ticking [if its ticking I'm still asleep]. Then I thought maybe it's a warship that I am looking at side on, possibly heading southwest. As I watched the hull of either a Very Large Crude Carrier or an Ultra Large Crude Carrier emerged coming straight at GLAYVA. As it passed half a mile astern I felt like a very small ant just being missed by a size 12 boot. Unfortunately the sun not being up I couldn't take a picture as the aperture opening I've learnt at sea is so long that all you get is a very blurry wobbly picture from the boat movement. However I could download this from the net.



The Biggest Wind

On my way to the start of the Jester Azores Challenge in Plymouth. I had come down the French coast to buy some wine and also have a few decent meals before being confined to GLAYVA for a few weeks. I

crossed back to England between Cherbourg and Portland Bill to avoid the Casquets TSS and while crossing Portland Coastguard reported as of 0600 that day that a F8 was imminent. It was close to 1400 as I skirted the Casquets TSS and entered Lyme Bay and it was blowing F6, so I assumed that was the worse I was going to get as imminent in my almanac means within 6 hours. At last light as I was approaching Start Point the wind built up to an F8 so I stood well out from the Point to avoid the worst of the overfalls as by that time I had a wind over tide situation.

F8 for GLAYVA means that I can't carry any main at all and a slip of a jib. As a result I can only sail at about 90° to the wind. I was just able to lay a line inside the Eddystone Light but as the F8 was a Northwesterly, I couldn't hold a course that would get me any closer than 15 miles to the Plymouth breakwater [my waypoint]. This was about 0300 and I tacked back and forwards just managing each time to clear the Eddystone light, leaving it to the South. Interestingly enough a WZ being reported by Brixham Coastguard was that the Eddystone light was out and it was marked to the north by a North cardinal Buoy, another reason I wanted to leave it to my south as with a dark night teeming with rain, visibility was not good. At one stage I considered sailing onto Falmouth hoping that I might be able to get close enough to get under the lee of the land. But I continued my tacks back and forth 15 miles off Plymouth Sound waiting for daylight to make my decision. Then very welcome news the Coastguard were expecting an easing to F6 for a few hours during the morning. It eased about 0800 so I put up my double reefed main and with a few 5 mile tacks I was able to draw into the lee of the land and then sail up Plymouth Sound where I could drop anchor in Jennycliff Bay to sleep and be protected from the F8 when it resumed.

A Big Start

Forty two boats started the Jester Azores Challenge including 3 Russians, A Frenchman, A Belgian, a Kenyan and of course an Australian; very different from our start in 2006 with only 10 boats. The starter boat a Gaff Rigged 34' Cutter called BLACK VELVET and under the command of Ewen Southby-Tailyour, would have felt at home starting an RSA race. Ewen only had one cartridge for his gun so we were warned that there would be no 10 or 5 minute warning guns just the start gun loaded with Baby Powder so that if not heard the length of the one mile start line we would all see it.

Twenty eight boats finished over about a two week period. The Frenchman, albeit a different one to last time, won again. Several people tried to claim last place, particularly as one boat had not picked up that there had been a change in the finish some six months before and ended up in Ponte del Garda wondering why no-one else had arrived. After some enquiries he sailed on to Praia do Vitoria.



NEA KAMENI the winning French boat, the skipper Dominique Katan, in the centre playing the guitar at one of the many parties we had to welcome another finisher.



GLAYVA ignominiously came 17th, but only because she refused to sail under engine in some very light

winds at the end. The last 60 miles took her 2 days and the last 10 miles 12 hours. [In a race without rules it is very hard to complain when not all challengers feel that as there are boats in the race that carry no engines at all we should all as a gentlemen's agreement keep our engines solely for charging batteries].

I had been considering buying a long keel boat as I thought it might give me a slightly more comfortable trip, something along the lines of a plastic folkboat, and had identified an Invicta [Van de Stadt] on the Isle of Wight that would have met my needs. But now as the only boat to have completed all Jester Challengers, I believe GLAYVA has to be on the start line for the 2010 Jester Challenge to Newport Rhode Island.

TAHITI BELLE a Val31 trimaran was lost on the return trip, it had hit something in the water according to the 73 year old skipper Nicholas Barham and broken both its outriggers. Nicholas was rescued by a passing ship but had to abandon his boat. For pure bloody mindedness I would give the prize to Nick Bridges and his Trapper 501, DOLPHIN OF FOWEY. DOLPHIN'S rudder fell off at about half way back. Nick refused to call for assistance and made it into the Scillies after a 16 day drift. In the Scillies a temporary replacement was fitted after digging a trench in the beach and running the boat over it at full tide and letting it sit on its bilge keels while the new rudder was fitted from underneath. I later shared a Fray Bentos and a few beers at Carr Green moorings with Nick and he is thinking he will keep the temporary rudder as he feels it is more strongly built than the original.