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Up the Creek...

Be Prepared

The reports by the Commodore – Andy Hobden – and the Rear-Commodore Racing – David Knight – both demonstrate the need to be prepared for unanticipated emergencies. Andy had to cope with the problems of a col-

lapsed crew-member, while David had to grapple with a failed engine. Both situations posed serious risks and in each case the skills of the skippers allowed the rapid adoption of appropriate measures. Training and experience can contribute

much to the development of such skill. The mental rehearsal of responses to anticipatable emergencies can, however, also be invaluable.

Season's Highlights

All the Tollesbury Cruising Club's rallies and races offer great fun for all participants. **The Late-Summer Cruise** (London this year) and the **Packing-Shed** seafood lunch promise to be as popular as ever. One innovation of particular interest this season is the **Early**

Summer Cruise to The Channel Islands. This will precede the start of the school summer holidays and thus offer an opportunity to visit locations that are generally not as familiar to East Coast sailors before the crowds that follow the start of the school holidays.

Contributions Needed

Up The Creek is, as ever, in need of interesting and informative articles. New contributors are very welcome. The sailing experiences of Club members are often invaluable: providing fellow members with news about developments in

cruising destinations; the effectiveness of new equipment; and the amusing experiences in distant and not-so-distant waters. The copy dates for the next two editions this year are: Monday the 23rd of July and Monday the 8th of October. If

anyone has any ideas about a possible contribution, please contact me, the editor, on 01621 868554.

Barry Jones
Zevkim

Contents

Editorial.....page 1	The Alternative Christmas Cruise...page 5
Commodore's Corner.....page 2	Members' List.....page 6
Racing Roundup.....page 3	Fresh Fields Cruising.....page 6
TCC Training Report.....page 4	

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Commodore's Corner

Despite my hopes of an active winter sailing *Tongue Twister*, events conspired against me. With The Wallet Ball and the trip to the Lifeboat College plus several weekends lost while the new headlining was fitted in the saloon, we didn't get out till the beginning of March.

It was a great first sail, if only across to Bradwell for the night. However, with few boats on the water and a gentle wind we could appreciate the beauty of the Blackwater.

The following weekend showed the opposite face of the river. After another night in Bradwell, Sunday morning gave us a '6 to 8' and actual gusts over force 9 rather than the expected '5 to 6'. We got back safely after a very interesting time getting out of the marina. Unsurprisingly the spray was icy cold and was made worse by the sting of hailstones blowing almost horizontally onto our faces as we punched, painfully slowly, up the creek.

First Things

The first two club cruises in the programme were well supported. **The Shakedown Cruise** to Bradwell was well attended with about a dozen boats taking part. The Easter Cruise was a great success with about fourteen boats. The superb sunshine but poor sailing winds justified our choice of a local cruise and **Heybridge Basin** on Easter Sunday was glorious.

Many members will be aware that *Tongue Twister's* trip from Heybridge Basin to Bradwell was made memorable when my crew was taken ill and had to be taken

ashore, with the assistance of the Coastguard, the West Mersea Lifeboat and the Essex Air Ambulance. Philippa collapsed and went into shock soon after we left the Basin. Our special thanks go to Paul and Sue from *Herald*. Sue, a nurse, leapt across to assist once she realised my problem. 'Single Handed' takes on a new meaning when trying to support an unconscious patient with one arm while manoeuvring a yacht in confined waters. Fortunately Philippa soon recovered in hospital and all was soon well.

The Fitting Out Supper

The Fitting Out Supper on the 14th April, in Aid of the RNLi was especially 'fitting' following our adventures. Chef Alan and his staff excelled themselves and our guest speaker Clive Pickering, former Coxswain of the West Mersea life-boat, gave an entertaining talk. The final total from the raffle and auctions looks set to exceed £1000, which shows amazing generosity from our members and many thanks must go to Vice Commodore David Walkerdine for his efforts in getting some notable prizes.

Things to Come

Those of you who have given me an email address should have had the programme before Christmas and all members should have received their official versions by now. We think it's a good one and it has started well. However, a couple of amendments have had to be made. We pencilled in something for Bonfire Night as last year's cruise to Brightlingsea was so successful, but, with high

water at around 18:45hrs, a cruise is probably not feasible so we will try to think of something else. One definite amendment to the programme, at least, is that the Oostende Rally will now be held over the weekend of 3rd to 5th August. This is great news for *Tongue Twister* as we should be back from the Channel Islands by then. Those TCC members who have attended over the last couple of years will testify as to how good a weekend it is. Our thanks must go to Wivenhoe Sailing Club and Bernie Hetherington in particular for organising it.

Brightlingsea Harbour-Master

Talking of Bernie, as Harbour-master at Brightlingsea, he has always made Tollesbury Cruising Club members welcome, whether we arrive on a club cruise or unannounced, and has always found space for us. His hip has been troubling him for years and he went into hospital for an operation on it just after Easter. I am told all went well and we should see him back at work about mid May

Finally, if you are planning to come on our cruises then please try and let us know as early as possible and just as importantly let us know if you cannot make it, especially when meals are to be booked. Berthing is always tight at many of our venues and the more we can help the other harbour masters, the better.

Wishing you a great Season.

Andy Hobden
Commodore
Tongue Twister

The Racing Season with Dave Knight

Thankfully the fitting out season is now over and the list of jobs-to-be-done now completed. However, I am still not sure of my sanity.

Fitting-out Fun

This winter's work included replacing the old mild steel fuel tank, re-insulating the engine bay, and interfacing all the instruments to the computer whilst adding AIS and Navtex. Yet again; on some positively horrible winter's days you could have found me working even harder to get the boat back in commission for early April.

Double Trouble

All this work was climaxed by the **Shakedown Cruise** to Bradwell on Easter Sunday. Whilst other club members who had ventured out to **Heybridge** were involved in *Tongue Twister's* emergency (see Andy Hobden's report), I had my hands full as I had decided to sail without crew (none of my volunteers turned up!) and as the boat was not as spick & span as I like it for this occasion, I was worried even before I left the marina.

It was no surprise, therefore, that I had engine problems (again) and found myself drifting in the Blackwater bleating on the VHF for a tow. All this whilst Andy's emergency was happening. Thankfully after 20 minutes of feeling foolish I stuck the Autopilot on and, tacking under reefed genoa, spent time checking the engine. In a very short time I had it running again. I was thankfully escorted into Bradwell where my confidence gradually returned. The moral here is

not to do a shakedown on your own!

Season's Delights

However, the whole point of this article is to tell you all about the delights of this season's racing. As usual we are running a full calendar of 8 races of which I will touch on the first few.

The Pursuit Race

is, by tradition, the first race of the season and was held successfully on the 5th of May. I regard it is a race backwards, as each participant is given an individual start time and, when I have done my handicaps right, we all cross the line at **Pye End** together. This year, it looked as if it might have been doomed to fail even before we started, but it really was quite fun.

The Goldie Challenge

The second race of the season was scheduled to be **The Goldie Challenge**, on the 12th May; a straight forward passage race to Burnham. In the last nine years I've done this race, I can never remember perfect conditions. There has either been too little or far too much wind. This year we had intended to celebrate the race at the Royal Corinthian Y.C., since we were made so welcome last year. In the event, however, strong winds caused the cancellation of the race, which was just as well as the RCYC had doubled-booked the restaurant for that night.

On the 9th June it is **The Wallet Shield**. It is an inter-club race between Colne Y.C., Bradwell Quay Y.C., Maldon Little Ships, Tollesbury Sailing Club and ourselves.

This is the most serious race that we get involved in, and this year it is being run alongside the Mersea Y.C.'s - **Cirdan Challenge** and a **Twister** race meeting, it will be a very busy start, and certainly very exciting. Hopefully we can get as large a fleet of TCC boats out there, as it is the club with the fastest 3 boats (on handicap) which takes home the silverware.

Winning Women

The following weekend 16/17th June is **The Teapot Race**, which is for our female helms to show their skills and the following day **The Boudica** for all female crewed boats. Alongside this we will run the fun **Teddy Bear Race** where it is more important to have our furry friends in the rigging than setting sails properly.

Have a Go!

I hope the weather will be kinder to us this year and I will not have to cancel each race in turn. I am looking forward to seeing all the old 'head bangers' plus hopefully many new faces. Remember, if you do not want to join in a race, you can always cruise to the destination and join in the party there.

However, if you think that racing is not for you, remember we have all trimmed our sails finer to pick up that 'nth' of a knot to overtake that larger yacht in front. After all it is a great fun way to improve our sailing skills.

David Knight
Rear-Commodore, Racing
Dionysus

TCC Training Report

We have completed two SRC **Marine Radio** courses, a **First Aid** and a **Diesel Engine** maintenance course since the end of last season. All were fully booked.

It was the first Diesel Engine course to be run at TCC by **Richard Mansfield**, who is a member of the Windsor Yacht club and a very experienced RYA instructor as well as being the owner of a Broom 42. We were very pleased to secure Richard's services and we hope to be able to use him again later this year.

Ken Drinkwater kindly assisted me again this year, keeping me honest and assisting in the practical parts of the course. The local West Mersea Coast Guard sector manager **David Boughton** also gave us a brief on GMDSS during the last radio course and we hope to be able to convince him to attend again for future courses.

Further similar courses could be run in the autumn/ early winter this year subject to sufficient demand. It is important that courses are well supported to ensure that they break even. Training courses are provided as a service to the club and any ex-

cess of income over costs is invested in new training equipment. This year we have been able to acquire two new Icom 505 training radios.

There was slight consternation during the last SRC course, when the MCA safety broadcasts were received on the Icom radios loud and clear in the classroom despite no aerials being fitted and this just before we 'broadcast' DSC distress!! These 'transmissions' were eventually carried out with the local Coastguard listening very carefully, just in case the training radios were in fact transmitting! The headlines in the local press would have made interesting reading! "Tollesbury Cruising Club breaks all records for false transmission of DSC distress alerts" - Instructor held in the tower!

A recent blind survey of our courses conducted for the RYA resulted in some very high scores and very encouraging comments from course participants, so we must be doing something right!

There was some discussion in 2006 about possible **Day Skipper** and or **Yacht Master/**

Coastal Skipper shore -based courses for 2007/2008. We are prepared to run courses, subject to sufficient demand, but we must see confirmed applications by the end of June at the latest.

As Pat and I are planning to spend from January to April in New Zealand next year, the plan is for me to take the first three months of these courses and for Ken Drinkwater to complete the second three months.

I will sort out a provisional programme and proposed costings for the autumn, which will be published on the club notice board and in the next newsletter.

Please contact me or Louise Goldie if you intend to sign on for these or the other courses offered by the club! Notes left in the Brokerage will find me.

Don't forget that I am the local RYA ICC/ Cevni assessor (sail) if you are planning to go foreign this year.

Despite all this, enjoy your season!

Ron Fry
The Brokerage



The Alternative Christmas Cruise

with Hilary Morgan

The Tollesbury Christmas Cruise is unique. Come rain or shine, many brave souls make their way across the water to the relative comfort of Bradwell Marina and plug in the shore power.

This year we had 'The Alternative Christmas Cruise'. Jim and I both turned 50 this year so we decided to push the boat out, literally, and spend Christmas in the **British Virgin Islands** courtesy of Sunsail. There are many stories to tell. We had expected to see Andy and Wendy in the departure lounge at **Antigua** airport, as we knew they were to return on the flight on which we had arrived, but bumping into Paul and Jill Atkins was a surprise indeed and made the horrendous queue pass so much more pleasantly. It just goes to prove that wherever you are, you always bump into someone from Tollesbury!

A Curious Christmas Day

The highlight of the trip was perhaps Christmas Day itself. Father Christmas had managed to make it down the mast of our very tired-looking Beneteau to leave a sprinkling of presents on the saloon table. After a breakfast of pineapple, kiwi and oranges we motored out of **Great Harbour** on the island of **Jost van Dyke** and some fifteen minutes later settled on a mooring buoy in the aptly named **White Bay**. Ross, our eldest, had said he dreamt of spending Christmas on a palm-fringed beach with white sand and this one definitely fitted the bill.

Two turtles broke the surface as

we arrived and we quickly donned snorkel gear and joined them. These gentle creatures seemed unperturbed by our presence and continued to graze the weed growing on the sandy sea bed some 8ft below us. Every so often they came to the surface and took a breath with a tiny sigh. There was a small reef across the bay and we were able to see many of the fish and corals we had come to expect throughout the area. Moving towards the beach, there were pinky-red starfish on the sea floor and as the beach shelved, a huge shoal of tiny silvery fish turned the clear water grey. Pelicans plunged into the sea to shovel up their lunch. We preferred to have ours at the **Soggy Dollar Bar**, so-called because there is no jetty and you have to wade ashore. Soggy dollars are pegged out to dry on a washing line above the till!

Pre-booking Pays!

I had had the foresight the night before to make a dinner reservation at the **Sandcastle Hotel**. There was an influx of Americans during the day, many of whom had made their way across the **Francis Drake Channel** which separates the British and US Virgin Islands. Many guide books say that the hotels have a dress code – long trousers, blazer and tie for the gents, cocktail dresses for the ladies. The lady I spoke to told me "elegant casual" and called me "honey". We could certainly do casual having spent the last ten days in the same pair of shorts and very little else but 'elegant' would pose a

problem. We could just about manage clean. Little did I realise the **Soggy Dollar** and the **Sandcastle** were one and the same thing!

Dining with a Difference

A table had been laid beneath a palm umbrella, bedecked with fairy lights. We sipped our rum laden fruit punches and embedded our bare feet in the cool white sand while the cicadas sang in the adjacent bushes and the sea lapped the shore a few feet away. I had been told that dinner was "just a buffet" but there were several courses of cutlery laid out before us. We were served onion soup and lobster salad and then the so-called buffet which turned out to be a full scale carvery with turkey, roast beef, roast ham and all the trimmings! Suitably replete as befits the best of Christmas dinners we sat back on our beach chairs and made conversation with the Americans on the next table. Liz (Ross's girlfriend) and I were just remarking that the only thing we had missed about Christmas at home was mince pies when the hotel owner, the American lady I had spoken to previously, came and offered us dessert. "We have traditional pumpkin pie for our American visitors," she said in her southern drawl, "but I expect yo'all would rather have mince pies or plum puddin'?" Well that was it. The icing on the cake. Now it felt like Christmas despite the absence of the ubiquitous drizzle and the Queen's Speech that usually punctuates our Yuletide.

We said our goodbyes, got into

(Continued on page 6)

Members' List - 2007

Stewart Wallace has been compiling **The Members' Directory for 2007** and would still welcome your input. Please contact him directly with any changes or updates for your entry in the directory. If you are a new member or have not previously been in the Directory, please send him details as soon as you can.

The Directory is a private list for members' use and has proved very

useful over the years it has been produced. The only external copy goes to Bernie at Brightlingsea.

Information required:

Boat Name and type

Regular crew (including skipper) – First names only

Mobile phone number or MMSI

If you would like to send in your email address, that will be included in the next edition.

The first draft was placed in the club-house over Christmas and the final draft was scheduled to be available at the Fitting Out supper. Contact Stewart on 02084608634 (after 2000hours) or email him on Stewart146@hotmail.com putting TCC in the subject line, so that it doesn't get rejected.

Fresh Fields Cruising

Are you planning a trip to the Baltic or Mediterranean in the next five years? Perhaps you fancy the ARC? Stewart Wallace has offered to arrange a relaxed day for us to discuss plans for more extended cruising and to

learn from members who have previously taken the plunge.

Would you fancy spending a winter Saturday in the club, swapping notes and discussing adventurous plans?

If interested, contact Stewart on

02084608634. He would like to hear from you whether you are a potential adventure cruiser or someone who has already done it and would be happy to share your experience with others.

(Continued from page 5)

Christmas Cruising continued

the dinghy and made our way back across the bay under the stars. In the words of Lou Reed it really was a 'Perfect Day'. In fact it was a perfect holiday. Superb sailing in a constant warm breeze under sunny skies punctuated by the odd cluster of clouds and the occasional tropical shower. Nothing is more than a couple of hours away. The sea is either very deep and blue or turquoise in shallower areas where the sea bed is sandy. There are coral reefs to be avoided unless snorkelling but these are clearly marked on the chart and can be easily seen from

the deck. There are endless little bays and coves and you can understand why there were so many pirates here. Spanish ships returning from the New World were plundered as they passed between the islands on their way back to Europe. There are little beach restaurants in many of the bays. The current £/US\$ rate made it easy to eat out every night. Steaks were superb, obviously flown in from the States, and we ate lobster and more local fish such as mahi-mahi and flying fish. We won't talk about the cocktails – can't remember anything about them! Snorkelling was great and made you feel as if you were swimming in

someone's tropical fish tank. Fish of every colour and size, corals of every shape. Some inquisitive fish swam beside you and followed you wherever you went. Others scurried away at your approach. People were on the whole very friendly and had a wild sense of humour and despite it being the peak time, it never really felt crowded.

We will definitely be going back though we'll give the bank balance a rest first. It would be great fun to go as a group. An alternative Tollesbury Christmas Cruise perhaps?

Hilary Morgan
Quicksilver