

Volume 14, no. 3, Autumn/Winter 2009



Up the Creek...

All Change at the Tollesbury Cruising Club

It has been all-change at the Tollesbury Cruising Club this autumn. The October AGM saw a greater change of committee membership than for many years. Dave Cooke, Peter Philpot and Stewart Wallace are 'old hands'. **Dave Cooke** now takes over as commodore and **Peter Philpot** is the new vice-commodore. Only **Stewart Wallace** remains 'in post' as Treasurer.

The flag officers are all new, as are the other committee members.

Many of the retiring members are old friends and familiar faces around the marina. As retiring editor, I have been particularly grateful to **David Knight** who was one of the most regular and reliable contributors of reports, especially on the racing that he organised with such enthusiasm and efficiency.

I am also delighted to be able to extend a welcome to **Hilary Morgan**, who is succeeding me as editor of *Up the Creek*. She can be contacted via the email address and mobile phone number detailed on her entry on the new, committee page on the TCC webpage.

Barry Jones

Sailing is Serious 'Fun'

We hope that the articles in this edition of *Up the Creek* will encourage the future sailing adventures of TCC members, rather than put them off for life! When reading **Ian Robinson's** article on 'power sailing' to Porto, I had to conclude that his experience was something that I could probably forego, with-

out much regret. The storm-bound experiences of the late-summer cruisers in Southwold also seemed to be particularly challenging. **Pete Farndon's** encounter with an out-of-control Sprintsail barge also serves as a reminder that our safety at sea can also be as much a matter of what other sea-goers do, as it is

of our own skills or shortcomings.

However, sailing remains one of the most rewarding leisure activities which could benefit from greater official encouragement.

Barry Jones

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Published by Tollesbury Cruising Club, Tollesbury Marina, Tollesbury, Essex, CM9 8ST

New Commodore's Message

Where to start?
Always difficult ...

Well, I think I need to introduce myself but (hopefully) many of you already know me.

My name is Dave Cooke and I'm your new commodore – sounds rather grand - !! I'm still getting used to the idea...

A brief biography

Family -

I am married to Jane and have two teenage children, Jessica and Rhys. They all love to sail – except Jess who loves her horse a bit more than the boat. The children have pretty much grown up at Tollesbury. We arrived when Jess was 6 and Rhys 4.

Work –

Try to avoid it on the whole and go sailing.

Sailing –

I started out messing about with dinghies with my dad and brother on the Norfolk Broads and on the sea when I was very young. I was always fascinated by water and couldn't stay away from it (Rhys is much the same). I didn't get my own boat until my late teens when I bought an old National 12, which I then renovated. After months of work, I remember launching the N12 in a local canal one rainy Saturday just to see if it would float. What I hadn't realised at the time was just how much clinker built wood hulls leak when they have dried out for some time. I learnt a lot about bailing technique that day. While at college, I was fortunate to get a 6 month placement in the Lake

District and was able to spend a summer doing the whole 'Swallows and Amazons' thing with the other students.

I have owned, and the family still own, a number of dinghies but 11 years ago we finally decided we could afford to buy our own cruiser after chartering and sailing on friends' boats for many years. Our first boat was *Clytie*, a 26ft Westerly Griffon. We had lots of fun with her and did our first Channel crossing to Calais. After 5 years we realised we needed a bit more space and, fortunately, I was made redundant and that helped us buy *Nimrodel* and we have never looked back.

The Committee and the plans....

In case you don't know them already, let me introduce you to the new committee:

Julian Goldie – President

Louise Goldie - Secretary

Peter Philpot – Vice Commodore (*Codan*)

Geoff Couch - Rear Commodore Cruising (*Breezer*)

Ray Apthorp – Racing coordinator (*Aloha*)

Stewart Wallace – Treasurer (*Mornaque*)

Ian Robinson (*Ostara*)

Rob Perrin (*Grey Goose*)

Colin Shead - Webmaster (*Toodle Pip*)

Hilary Morgan- Editor (*Quicksilver*) -

As I write, the new committee has met for the first time and we had a very successful planning session. There's already a great deal of excitement about all the

possibilities for next year's cruising and racing, as well as the land based social events. We have far too many ideas for the time we've got, so we will just have to try to fit in what we can. It looks like we will be able to get up to **London** for the **Spring Bank Holiday** week. We would also like to organise a summer cruise for the beginning of the school holidays. Should we turn left or right when we leave the Blackwater? Holland or France?

We also intend to run as many of the races the weather and attendance allow. Ray and the rest of the committee are trying to think of ways of making the racing more interesting and accessible, with the hope that more of us will join in and enjoy the fun.

Purely socially, we will, of course, have our usual **Fitting Out** and **Laying Up suppers** and the famous **Commodore's Cocktail Party**. We are also thinking about a **summer ball**, an event we would like to run if you would like it – but we need your support to make it work.

We will have to fix the program very soon so that it can be included in the tide tables and get venues and marinas booked. However, I and the committee would love to hear your opinions on the sailing and the social events so contact me, or anyone else on the committee, with your thoughts.

e-mail :

commodore@tollesburycc.co.uk

phone: 07779 734855

Dave Cooke

Nimrodel, C28

Stormbound in Southwold

with Hilary Morgan

Jim and I were going to have two weeks on the East Coast. The first we would spend relaxing and 'doing our own thing' and then join the Late Summer Cruise for the second. We met up with *Nimrod* at **Orford** and spent an enjoyable evening catching up with Dave, Jane, Rhys and Alice. In the morning we headed for **Woodbridge** as we didn't like the sound of the weather forecast for the next couple of days.

We had not yet been into the **Deben** in *Quicksilver* and were pleased to pay a long overdue return visit. However our visit coincided with the remnants of Hurricane Bill and we were stormbound for 4 days! I suppose if you are going to be stuck for a few days somewhere then Woodbridge would be pretty high on the list. It was warm and sunny, if somewhat windy. The shops and restaurants did well out of our protracted stay, (unlike our credit cards!). We left on the evening tide on Saturday and reached the Deben entrance around high water. The night was calm and starry, the moon high in the sky, the tide flowing in the right direction so we continued on to reach Lowestoft in the very early hours.

Into Lowestoft

The new marina in **Hamilton Dock** is spacious and for the moment, pretty empty. It's not the prettiest marina on the East Coast but is safe and sheltered and as an added bonus, is part of the *Trans Europe network* so the discount applies for Tollesbury berth holders. It has the most water between pontoons on the East Coast and the

widest berths I have ever seen! You can almost get three boats between the pontoon fingers! Hamilton Dock is part of the **Lowestoft Haven Marina** which is the other side of the lifting bridge towards **Lake Lothing**. The marina does not seem to be 'manned' at present. It's just a question of tying up and calling the number on the sign during office hours to organise payment for the berth. That's why you don't get a response on the VHF.

Several boats had been neaped at Tollesbury and had their cruise somewhat curtailed. The remaining eight boats (*Mimosa, Nikita, Rose Tyler, Codan, Dualin, Avocet, My Gal* and *Sandpiper*) arrived in Lowestoft the next morning and we spent much time catching up with old friends and just chilling, planning our short journey on to **Southwold**. Like a small boy, Richard (*Nikita*) buzzed around the marina trying out his new dinghy while Wendy accompanied

Andy and Jo (*Dualin*) in theirs. They set off through the dock and upstream but on the way back ran out of fuel right in front of the Harbour Control by the bridge. The Port Con-

troller was quite worried about them as there was a dredger heading downstream but they were able to signal their intentions as requested and communicated via handheld radio.

Genteel times on the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Y.C.

On Bank Holiday Monday night, Peter had arranged a splendid meal at the **Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club** and our son Robbie arrived just in time to join in. Paul Noyland had got there an hour or so earlier by train to join Keith and Betty on **Rose Tyler**. We found Stewart and Wendy (*Mornaque*) waiting for us in the bar. They had driven to Lowestoft to join us, having been neaped in at Tollesbury.

I always enjoy a visit to the RNSYC. The building itself is a haven of calm and tranquillity, like stepping back in time. Brass canons, polished wooden floors, portraits of Royals and some particu-



Rafting-up in Southwold (Robbie Morgan)

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(stormy Southwold, continued)

larly fine paintings in the bar and dining room. I understand the antique urinals in the Gents have to be seen to be believed and certain 'ladies' even ventured to take a peek at the monumental structure!

On to Southwold

An 0730 departure to Southwold had been agreed and I saw *Quicksilver* out of her berth and took to the A12 in Robbie's car. I stopped for a while on the sea-front to watch some of the fleet leave the harbour in the morning sunshine then headed south to wait for them. From the beach at Southwold I could just about make out a few sails on the horizon. I had the hand held radio and a pair of binoculars and kept an eye on their progress for while. When I saw *Quicksilver* drop her sails, I got back in the car and drove down to the harbour.

Berthing in **Southwold** always seems to worry people who go there for the first time. It's really just a question of being well-prepared and taking things really slowly. Let the tide do the work for you and remember to turn round before the bridge!!! However many fenders you put out, you always need more and this time would prove to be no exception. We organised ourselves into three rafts of three boats with *Quicksilver*, *Rose Tyler* and *Codan* on the inside against the wooden staging. Loads of fenders, fender boards and long ropes – it took a while but we all got settled in the end. Out came the crabbing lines, the shopping bags, the folding bikes, the beach towels, and the fishing rods.

Over the years Jim and I have been on many a club cruise, each one memorable in its own way. However this year's Late Summer

Cruise will surely be remembered as the 'Stormbound in Southwold' cruise.

We were all aware of the storm approaching and that we might get pinned down for an extra day but the predicted wind speeds seemed to increase with every new forecast. Flags and burgees were taken in, halyards and loose ropes secured, extra fenders put in place.

On Wednesday evening the members of **Southwold Sailing Club** cooked a delicious meal and served it to us in their lovely dining room with panoramic views of the river to one side and of the town to the other. We tucked in as the wind began to howl and the rain began to lash the club house windows. What is one to do in such a situation? Why, get another round in of course!

Stormy Times

It's amazing how noisy a boat can be in a blow. Squeaking fenders, screaming rigging, not to mention various unidentified creaks and groans. And so it continued – for three days. But hey - this is how you make friends in Tollesbury Cruising Club! Such experiences



Pounding piers (Robbie Morgan)

are bonding exercises and fuel conversations for balmy June evenings at anchor in Pyefleet – "Do you remember when were stormbound in Southwold?" We are

old hands at making our own entertainment. Some of the ladies had a cream tea on the pier, Glen and Peter rustled up a quick quiz, a Chinese take away was organised, and Graham and Mag managed to squeeze twelve people into *Mimosa's* cockpit for afternoon tea! (Or was it thirteen? I lost count!) Peter also managed to organise a tour of the Adnams brewery. (I'll spare you the obvious cliché!) I understand that it was more informative than thirst quenching but that everyone made up for it afterwards and spent much of the rest of the afternoon in the Nelson. 15 year old Ben (*Mimosa*) caught a sea bass on the rising tide but despite having rods out for the entire stay, Jim only managed two slippery eels! With glee, Colin the Harbour Master showed us the weather forecasts he had received and told us he was getting readings of 40 knots plus from his wind speed indicator! Any attempts at organising a 'pontoon' party were thwarted by the weather as everyone hunkered down. The next raft of boats seemed a world away.

Dave and Sue (*Iceni II*) joined us for a windswept cup of tea in *Quicksilver's* cockpit. They had driven up from Titchmarsh. Dave braved the cold wind but when he started to shiver, he finally accepted the offer of a fleece! It

was good to see them and their visit was a really nice surprise. They brought with them their own tales of the storm and informed us

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(stormy Southwold, continued)

that tiles had been ripped off the shelters on Walton seafront! We later heard about Robin and Jean's (*Polo IV*) experiences in the Orwell and their hair raising propulsion from Ipswich to Levington under storm jib alone.

But by Friday afternoon we were all sick and tired of the wind which just would not abate. We'd had enough of the shops and the wind-swept beach. Cabin fever began to set in. The long awaited and forecast change in wind direction just didn't come. Strong Wind Warnings seemed to have been in force for much of the summer and now we had 9s and even 10s being forecast in the south of the Thames area! There were white horses on the river and we took trips to the entrance to see the waves crashing

creaked and groaned as shore lines stretched tighter and tighter and fenders compressed and flattened as if they would burst with the exertion.

Escape at last!

The gale warnings continued and it wasn't until Saturday that those magic words "gale now ceased" passed the Coastguard's lips. The wind had gone into the west and we hoped that this would improve the sea state. One by one the Tollesbury fleet crept out of Southwold on the rising tide, sails were set and we headed down the coast. I don't know where everybody went. We seemed to scatter to the four winds. Some to Shotley, others who knows where. Jim and I returned to a buoy between **Levington** and **Pin Mill**. We saw *Rose Tyler* and *Dualin* continue on down the Wallet.

wind would be south-westerly again in the morning and so as to avoid a wind over tide situation, we left the mooring in the Orwell and headed for Tollesbury in the fading light, passing *Codan* at anchor off **Shotley**. Peter and Glen waved. They must have wondered where we were going.

Night approach

We had had an intermittent fault in our nav lights but were not concerned as we were sailing, using our tricolour light for the first time in ages. By the time we reached **Clacton** the wind had shifted into the south west and we were faced with a motor home. That's when the intermittent fault became permanent but there was not another vessel in sight. It seemed to be alarmingly shallow next to the Colne Bar buoy and so we crept on towards **the Nass** soon picking up the new lit buoys. They really take the stress out of a night approach to Tollesbury and our powerful searchlight was only needed for illuminating the sill gauge. We reached our berth around 0100 and fell asleep as our heads hit our pillows - glad to be home safe and sound.

Well, as I write here in my cosy inland house some two weeks later, the wind is still blowing! Now its doors and windows that are rattling and leaves that are rustling. At least the house isn't moving or heeling to port. I no longer have to listen for "All Stations....." but I miss the camaraderie and the Dunkirk spirit that always prevails when the weather blows (literally) a hole in the 'best laid plans'.

When is a cruise not a cruise? When you are stormbound in Southwold.

Hilary Morgan
Quicksilver



Southwold's famous lighthouse (Robbie Morgan)

over the pier heads. Robbie gave up any thoughts of a sail and drove home to St Albans. (The lure of a seat at Twickenham for a London double header was too much to resist.) Local radio informed us that Felixstowe and Harwich were closed and that lorries were being parked on the A12!

All the while the inside boats

After a cracking sail in the sunshine – wind on the starboard quarter with a couple of knots of tide beneath us – we had hoped to spend a relaxing afternoon in the sunshine followed by a clear moonlit night. But our hopes were dashed as the cloud raced in and blotted out the sun. The evening weather forecast suggested that the

A Passage to Porto, with Ian Robinson

In October this year I made a passage from Portsmouth to Porto on board a Farr 65 yacht. The passage was 810 nautical miles long and lasted 5 days.

Each year in early October, *On-deck Sailing*, sends 4 matched Farr 65s from Portsmouth to participate in the ARC rally to Barbados. The first leg is more of a delivery trip and always heads for Portugal. This year the destination was Porto.

In all the years I have been sailing I had never had the opportunity to go offshore for more than 24 hours. With Carole's encouragement I decided to book a trip to Portugal with Gosport based *On-deck Sailing* with whom I had wrapped up my RYA Offshore Skipper examination last December. I was somewhat unsure how I would cope being at sea for a longer period and having to work watches and spend time below.

The Farr 65s were built for the 2000 Volvo Ocean Race Round the World. They are strong and fast, but not very comfortable. Carole was appalled when we looked over one at the recent Southampton Boat Show. Each yacht has berths for 11 paying crew, plus a professional team of a skipper and 2 mates. I was allocated to a boat called *Minerva* and we had 10 paying crew: 8 men and 2 women.

I chose the first leg in part because it was logistically the easiest, but also because it would probably be the hardest. In October one can almost be guaranteed to experience a gale in either the Channel or crossing Biscay. Finistere is, of course, notorious for heavy weather. "In for a penny in for a pound", so to speak. I got

my money's worth for afterwards our skipper commented that it had been his most difficult trip and the only one with head winds the whole way.



Crews gathering and waiting for the yachts

So tired of waiting

Crews were directed to gather at around noon at Portsmouth's Gunwharf Quay on the 1st October but, at the appointed hour, the boats were not there. They trickled in over the next 5 hours with *Minerva* being last. We were told, and it was obvious, that the boats were coming out of a refit. The boat was missing a wheel and the life rafts, whilst brand new, had not been fixed in place. The winch grinder was disassembled. First we were told that the plan was to sail at 1000 hours the next day and if we were delayed beyond noon we would not be leaving until Sunday as heavy weather was sweeping in. Knowing that we would not be sailing that night, we all went off as a crew to have a last meal. It soon became clear in the morning that there was no chance of *Minerva* being ready before

noon. Then the deadline was delayed by 3 hours. This all made personal preparation uncertain. I had Stuger on with me, which I did not want to take if we were not to

sail. In the end I took none and, based on what happened to those that did, I am not sure they would have done any good anyway.

Off at last

We did get away at 1500 hours and, after some safety drills in the Solent, we exited via the eastern channel and set off. In the be-

ginning the wind was a gentle westerly F3 and we settled on a starboard tack with a full main and a 110% genoa. Heavy weather was due to hit us around midnight. *Minerva* was making 8 to 9 knots and heeling at around 20 degrees.



Just setting off

We divided into three watches with 3 hours on duty and then 6 hours off. The duty watch cooked. On the first evening it was my watch on duty. I offered to cook

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(Passage to Porto, continued)

first as it was to be spaghetti bolognese, which is basically all I can cook. However, by the time I



The galley

had cooked it I felt too queasy to eat any. For the next 24 hours I ate nothing and drank only drank water, which staved off seasickness.

We stayed on the same tack all night and around midnight put in a reef. At 0800 on Saturday morning just off Alderney, we changed down to a working jib and put in a second reef and then tacked for the first time. I, along with 3 others, was caught to go forward to make the headsail change and was happy to find the sea still warm. A wave came over the bow and I was soaked. I, as did everyone, remained damp or wet for the rest of the trip. Changing the headsail reminded me why furling headsails are so popular. By the time we had completed the task I was exhausted. From **Alderney** until 0800 on Sunday, we tacked back and forth working to clear **Ushant**. After midnight the wind eased somewhat and the clouds cleared to reveal a full moon. We had a magical watch rushing along at 8 or 9 knots to windward. We had only one moment of alarm as we sailed under a very black cloud and were primed to dump the main at the first hint of big gusts.

Happily the cloud proved to be harmless. With 4 paying crew on my watch we each had roughly 45 minutes on the helm. Probably because I was the most experienced, I got to drive when the weather was worst and or when reefs were being pulled in. I was happy with this.

On Sunday morning we cleared **Ushant** heading south-west. We had a forecast lull in the wind for a few hours, which we made the most of. I started eating again and found porridge for breakfast and pasties for lunch very welcome. Dolphins and pilot whales came out to play a couple of times. As another south to south-westerly gale was expected soon we left the reefs in and the working jib set and motor-sailed. Two of the other boats were close by and the fourth was around 14 miles astern having had unexplained problems in yesterday's westerly gale. It became noticeably warmer. Decked out in baby grows, boots and full oilies I was too warm.

Strong blows the wind

Towards evening the wind and rain returned with a vengeance, and we were back to fighting our way southwards. Throughout the night and the whole of Monday and into Tuesday morning we drove west or south toward **Cape Finistere**. Everyone was keen to crack on and reefs were let out and pulled in on a regular basis. One remembers lying in one's bunk praying that the duty watch would pull in a reef and not leave it to the next watch, which seemed always to be one's own. Everyone, including the professionals, became sick from time to time,

but no one missed a watch. Eventually, with Spain, just over the southern horizon we made the final run west to the Cape, dodging Spanish fishing boats scattered along our path.

The boat began to suffer. Our water tanks leaked into the bilge, and we resorted to the emergency bottled water. A steering wheel became loose. The winch grinder started to fall apart. The sailing instruments failed. A 12mm Liros reef line on the mainsail broke. Deck leaks appeared. Most worryingly the hydraulic system controlling the backstay tension and the vang began leaking oil. The oil leaked on to the deck and made the steering area very slippery, but the big concern was a potential loss of backstay tension.



Hiding from the spray

The long way round

At 0900 hours on Tuesday morning we passed **Cape Finistere** on a westerly course. Porto was some 170 nautical miles to the south. Our skipper decided to drive another 60 miles to the west before tacking the boat to the south. The other 3 boats tacked south close to the coast, and all arrived in Porto in front of us.

At **Finisterre**, we became concerned by a Portuguese forecast of wind speeds of 50 knots. Eventually, with relief, we understood

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Barging in!

Peter Farndon

On a glorious morning in August, Brenda and I and our niece Linda left one of Marconi Sailing Club's buoys for Pyefleet Creek. After a leisurely sail we found, as expected on a Bank Holiday, that Pyefleet was very busy. It was lunchtime and we decided to anchor near the leaning tower at Brightlingsea on the East side of the Colne. A motor and a sailing cruiser were already there at anchor but well spaced.

It was a simple operation to mo-

tor into the wind towards the shore and let the anchor out so that we were head to wind and sheltered from the F5 easterly that had freshened up from the morning. We took our lifejackets off and had lunch watching the action over the stern of traffic up and down the Colne.

What a drag!

A Thames Sailing Barge came past and sailed up towards Wivenhoe and back. On their return the skipper brought her round up be-

hind us onto the mud inshore of us and beam into the wind. This immediately concerned us as the tide was rising quickly and the wind was still F5. The barge may have started well inshore of us but as expected floated off the mud and slowly but inexorably 140 tons was blown towards us.

The crew had seen the danger and had let out their anchor and prepared for the impending collision by hanging filthy black tyres over the side! Fortunately their

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(passage to Porto, continued)

that the forecast was only for potential gusts in electrical storm clouds. We drove on westwards.

During the next 24 hours we experienced the worst weather and seas of the trip. A peak boat speed of 12.2 knots to windward was clocked. People were pitched over the top of their lee cloths on a couple of occasions. The seas coming over the bow were big enough to completely lift up anyone sitting out on the weather side. At midnight and for the next few hours lightning was lighting



Nearly there

up the skies above and around us. We had to dodge a couple of ships when we found ourselves in a busy shipping lane and had no certainty that they would see us on radar. After dawn the weather began to abate.

At 0800 on Wednesday morning we were back close to the coast, but still had another 80 nautical miles to go, which took another 12 hours to complete. This part of the passage was the best. The wind was

southerly, but had eased and the sun came out. The swell coming out of the west was large, but not coming on board anymore. Also, of course, we could now see Portugal and knew we would finish in a few hours.

At 2000 hours, we docked in the commercial harbour. Having no access to water, electricity or a shower block it was a case of a quick wipe round with wet wipes and liberal application of deodorant or perfume, as the case might be, before setting out for a meal and a beer. Within 30 minutes we were ashore.

At the dock gate, a beggar said that we smelled worse than he did, but we did not care.

Ian Robinson
Ostara



Eighty miles to go

Lazy Days of Summer?

In early August, Tollesbury Cruising Club held a well attended and highly successful barbecue at Mersea Stone,

at the mouth of the River Colne. Below, and on the following page, we publish some of the pictures that

were taken of this memorable and enjoyable event.



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(Barging in, continued)

anchor bit with a vengeance at the same time as I let out more chain. We avoided touching but were as the golfers say 'stymied'. If I wound more chain in, the barge would swing towards us and prevent any retrieval and possibly wrap the chain round their rudder. To make matters worse their engine was out of action and there was no room to sail off. After some discussion, we decided to let out all the chain and warp after putting a line onto their stern.

Suitably embarrassed, they launched their tender and came over to take the chain and warp from us to recover our anchor. This they did and found it extremely difficult to pull the chain off the mud, to the side of their gracefully swinging barge. When they eventually returned with the chain, warp and anchor, we had to lift it on board, out of their tender, and store the chain and warp back in the chain locker.

Could have been worse!

This all sounds dangerous and hard work. However, we have an elec-

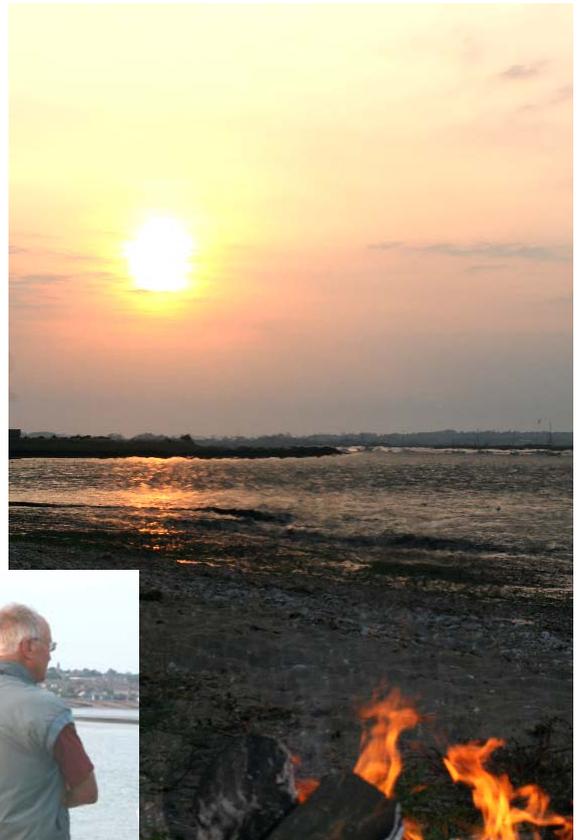
tric windlass, two big batteries and there were three of us on board. I was handicapped by having one wrist in a splint after a tennis fall but this motivated their crew to help us yachties.

Moral of the story :- Even when the day starts so well there is always someone out there who can come along and spoil it !

By the way the name of the barge starts with an E and ends with an E!!

Pete Farndon
Hearsay

More from Mersea Stone



For the full colour edition, see the Tollesbury Cruising Club web-page: tollesburycc.co.uk