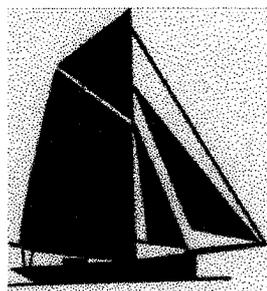


Volume 9, Issue 2, Summer 2004



Up The Creek...

Summer's Highlights

Tollesbury Cruising Club has made a good start to the season's cruising and racing programme. The frost-bite cruising over the Easter weekend was well-attended, particularly the dinner in the *Jolly Sailor* at **Heybridge Basin**, which attracted a number of four-wheeled sailors as well as those who had braved the waters. Those who had faced adverse winds to sail to Calais over the Whitsun weekend also reported warmly on the convivialities experienced at the French end of the trip. **Burnham** again saw substantial numbers dining in style at the **Royal Burnham Yacht Club**; **Goldie Challenge** racers being joined by cruisers (not gentle,

given the 30 knot plus gusts of mid-afternoon).

The high-season cruising programme is now approaching. **The Mersea Fish Shed** lunch should have taken place by the time this edition enters members' post-boxes, but the Barbecue at **Stone Point**, the mid-summer long cruise and the potentially very popular late-season cruise remain appealing prospects. The latter should be particularly attractive, with dinners at the **Royal Harwich Yacht Club** and the **Bristol Arms** in **Shotley**, and visits to **Ipswich**, the **Deben** and, if all goes well, the rivers **Alde/Ore**.

For the **Summer Cruise** *Tongue*

Twister, *Mimosa* and *Nikita* are intending to leave for Holland on 23/24 July. Andy Hobden on *Tongue Twister* hopes to make an overnight passage to **Oostende**, with a day or two there, with a visit to **Brugge** by canal or train before proceeding on to **Middleburgh**. The timing of the passage to Holland should allow the crossing of the traffic separation lanes in daylight. The return trip is planned for the 6th of August. Anyone wishing to accompany *Tongue Twister* is most welcome and a briefing session may be held in the Club House on Sunday the 18th July.

Barry Jones *Steorra of Tollesbury*

For Sale

Boat Compass: Silva 85E, black, flush mounted, illuminated dial, sail/power boat, nearly new, £30.00 ono (MRP £59.95)

Ship's Clock: Heavy solid brass, 7" diameter, clear and attractive code flag marked dial, brand new, £30.00 ono – suitable for boat/house use.

Safety Harness: complete with 5ft. safety strap and 2 snap hooks. Almost new, £30.00.

Contact – John Mason (Analise Too, B5), tel. 020 8946 1343 (or leave message on notice board).

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Racing Round Up

Andy Hobden, *Rear Commodore - Racing*

Numbers were a bit down for the **Pursuit Race** this year. Held on the 1st May, the weather was not very obliging for a pursuit race. The very light winds at the start seriously hindered the slower boats and most boats were bunched up together by the Colne Bar. With the winds remaining light and Dinner booked at The Walton and Frinton Yacht Club, the decision was made to shorten the course to finish at the Medusa Buoy. *Cobweb* made the most of the conditions to win this race once again, with *Tongue Twister* second and *Dionysus* a close third. *Polo IV* was well on her way to catching the leaders despite having started last as usual.

The Ladies' Races and Teddy Buoy Trophy took place over the weekend of 22/23 May. The races were once more plagued by light winds, and numbers were again disappointing. *Mimosa* won the Teapot Trophy with *Tsunami* second and *Andromeda* third. With only two entries for the Boudica Bowl, *Mimosa* won with *Tongue Twister* second. The Teddy Buoy trophy was won by *Nikita* followed by *Tsunami* and *Cobweb*. It was all change for the **Goldie Challenge Race** to Burnham. With a force 4 to 5 West to North West wind forecast, it promised

to be a good sail. Six boats crossed the start line with the wind blowing around 16 to 20 knots. Spinnakers were the order of the day. By the Wallet Spitway, dark clouds were looming. *Tsunami* broke her spinnaker pole, and did a spectacular broach, as the wind started to increase. By the Wallet Spitway Buoy, all spinnakers were down, as no one wanted to gybe. When the first squall hit forty knots, it became very interesting. All boats suffered broaches to varying degrees: *Whistler* broke her kicking strap; *Polo IV* lost a sail batten and pocket; and *Mimosa* retired with a badly fouled genoa.

The racing remained very competitive. As the squalls died away, reefs were shaken out only to go back in as the next squall came through. *Whistler* took the lead from *Polo IV* through the Swin, only to be overtaken on the close fetch into Burnham. *Tsunami* was revelling in the close reaching conditions, between broaches, and stormed across the line only a few seconds behind *Polo*, with *Whistler* third, *Cobweb* fourth and *Dulcibella* fifth. The race only took about three and half-hours which must be a record for this event.

On Handicap, the results were later confirmed as: *Tsunami* first; *Cobweb* second; *Whistler* third.

(Ok, so I have got to mention my recent Atlantic crossings somewhere. Interestingly, in the Burnham race, we experienced stronger winds in the gusts than we had in 5000 miles of ocean sailing. We also got wetter. We did have bigger seas in the Atlantic, but we also had whales, dolphins, turtles, clear blue sea and, mainly, sunshine.)

The Personal Handicap System still seems to be working, with some new and some old names to go on the Trophies this year. By the time this goes to press, the **Wallet Shield** and **Wallet Long Race** will be over.

Hopefully entries will be up for the **Steve Rix Trophy** returning from Shotley (5th September) and, of course, the **Round Osea Island Race** for the **Kings Head Cup** (18th September). If you haven't seen the back of Osea yet, I can recommend this race.

Andy Hobden
Tongue Twister
Rear Commodore -Racing

Brenda Robinson

Brenda Robinson (*Wispa*) died unexpectedly in Broomfield Hospital on 3rd June during her renewed fight against breast cancer. Apart from a short spell working in Australia, George and Brenda have been members of the club since 1992, initially with *Verity of Kent* (Nordship 28) and latterly with *Wispa* (Moody 35). The family would like to thank all members of the club for their messages of support.

Experiences of a Four-legged Sailor

Dear Reader

I'm Max a big slobbery Yellow Labrador and I sail on *Stargazer* with Dave and Geraldine and I thought I would take a few minutes of your time to tell you of my experiences of sailing.

I was only a few months old when I was introduced to *Stargazer*. It was the nearly Christmas cruise and my first experience of boating. It was fun and a lot of people with slurred speech visited our boat bringing bottles and glasses with them. Everyone petted me as I was small, cute and friendly, and I had a very enjoyable time.

During my first Winter, I visited *Stargazer* in the boatyard, whilst she was prepared for the next season. I had to be lifted up a ladder to get on board which was easy enough at that stage in my life. However, by the next Winter, I had grown considerably and it became almost impossible to get me on board safely and during one icy night, when I had an upset tummy, I had to be lifted on and off four times, which was extremely hazardous for both my owners and myself. Fortunately, during the last fitting out, we had a motorvan so I was able to stay safely at ground level.

A First season

My first sailing season started in the spring of 2002 and on the first visit to *Stargazer* I leapt out of the car eagerly and I did the usual doggie sniffing type things before being led down a very steep wooden ramp and along a bouncy track to the boat. *Stargazer* looked different to when she was in the boatyard – somewhat smaller and nearer to the ground. I was tied to a cleat on a short lead whilst all the paraphernalia associated with sailing was being loaded onto the boat, but I was impatient to get on board. I had grown a bit and the deck didn't look that far away so I jumped up and down and tried to get aboard on my own. I soon realised this had not been a good idea as my surroundings sud-

denly became very dark and wet. I had fallen between the boat and the pontoon, and had become trapped underneath the pontoon. I paddled about looking for a way out but couldn't get free as I was still firmly secured to the cleat. Fortunately things quickly improved when I was unceremoniously yanked out by my collar and deposited back on the pontoon. This was when I first realised that where there are boats there is water and, being a Labrador, I have made sure that I avail myself of every opportunity to swim, and whether it's clean, muddy or smelly water, it's all the same to me.

Accidents and Elevations

I wouldn't say I was particularly accident prone but that weekend did not go well. Having finally been dried off and lifted on board, I then decided not to wait to be lifted down into the saloon – I jumped from the first step, hit the floor with a resounding smack and slid across the floor crashing into the door of the forward cabin. I was not badly hurt, just a bit shaken, but I made the decision there and then not to jump on board again or go down into the saloon unaided as it was too dangerous. For a time, whilst my weight remained manageable, David and Geraldine carried me aboard but, as I got heavier (I'm a mere 35+ kilos), a solution to my problem had to be found and skipper, with the aid of a ladder, some wood and rubber car mats, made me a boarding ram, which I am generally happy to use. I still have to be lifted down into the saloon but, between us, we have perfected a technique which neither injures the crew nor myself – thank goodness.

During that first season I was introduced to the hitherto unknown intricacies of sailing. The big white monsters that flapped about, and the snakes that mysteriously wove themselves round my legs, I learned, are the sails and sheets and when Skipper shouts instructions to go about I know I have to move to the other side of the cockpit to be comfortable again. I appreciate that I am not much help with sailing, and I once overheard Dave say that a dog is about the most useless thing you can have on a boat, but I do like to do my bit so I usually encourage the crew by giving them a slobbery kiss now and again, but this is usually met with cries of 'for goodness sake Max, get out of the way' which I don't think is fair do you? After all I'm only trying to help.

New Friends and Fans
Since being introduced to boating, I have met lots of people and had lots of experiences. I am now quite agreeable to using the launches at West Mersea and Brightlingsea, the latter being the easiest as it's from the pontoon not the deck of *Stargazer*. The first time I took the launch to Brightlingsea I didn't want to go back after my walk and refused to board the launch. Geraldine slipped my lead thinking this would help – little did she know this was the opportunity I was looking for and I jumped off the pontoon into all that lovely thick gooey mud and ran around in it until I reached the Colne Yacht Club building. Needless to say I was not a very welcome sight, covered head to toe in mud, and everyone stayed well away from me, which at the time I thought was strange as I was only playing and having fun. I now realise that nobody likes me as much when I'm wet and dirty but, even so, I still like to shake myself dry next to someone - it's so much fun to hear them squealing and shouting. After a wash under the tap on the slipway I was allowed back on the launch.

New Friends and Fans

Last summer we joined the cruise to London and on our way back we spent

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Our first “Big” Race !

Wallet Shield Saturday 26 June 2004

This year we joined the trend and changed our boat from a relatively compact 26 ft Westerly Griffon *Clytie* to a 34ft Westerly Falcon *Nimrodel*. After registering for 3 club races with our new boat, we had to withdraw from two (for various reasons) and did not even start the third, so the pressure was on, and just completing the Wallet Shield was going to be an achievement !

We are not really racing sailors by any stretch of the imagination, much preferring to potter/cruise around the east coast at weekends, going further on our summer holidays. However we raced *Clytie* a number of times with the club, particularly enjoying the Harwich pursuit race. This event avoids the ‘excitement’ (?) of the start line, as each boat has its own start time based on handicap, and, in theory, all boats finish together.

We have not entered the **Wallet**

Shield in previous years mainly because, for us, it seemed a little out of our league, as it often involves many more boats than we are used to in the TCC races. Anyway we decided that, with growing confidence in our new boat, we would take part this year. However, half of our usual crew (Jane my wife and my daughter Jessica) could not make it due to other commitments. This left Rhys, my 10 year old son, and myself. After a very short debate we decided that we were

David Cooke, *Nimrodel*

going to need help, so a few phone calls turned up two enthusiastic sailing friends who were willing to take part in the race.

As usual, I watched the weather predictions towards the weekend and, although it looked like a typical summer weekend, with showers and clouds on race day and possibly sunshine on the Sunday, the winds for Saturday looked good with a southerly force 4 predicted. I arrived with Rhys and one of my press ganged crew, John, on Friday evening at Tollesbury, keen to find out what the course was going to be on the next day. I soon found out it was not as simple as that. There was a list of some 10 course alternatives depending on the wind direction and a map of the Black-

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More From Max

the night at Queenborough. To begin with I was not impressed with Queenborough as I thought my exercise would have to be taken on the concrete barge we had moored against, but, eventually, I was taken ashore. The only problem was that there was a turnstile on the pontoon between me and what promised to be a good spot to relieve myself. Not to be outdone, I wriggled between the bars and scampered ashore. However, I was not going to make things easy on the return journey as I was not ready to return to the boat, so I refused to wriggle through the bars as I had previously done. After much discussion and cajoling by my co-sailors (the crews of *Nightjar*, *Iceni* and *Goodtimin* were also ashore) I was eventually forced to go

through the turnstile together with Geraldine – I had to stand on my hind legs and push the bars with my front legs. The 50p token was duly paid - I can’t remember by whom but I hadn’t taken any money out with me - and the rest of the party, having realised the ‘two for the price of one’ offer available, paired up and with much giggling and laughing did the same – it’s funny what humans can find amusing.

We have recently returned from a week’s cruise around the Blackwater with the grandchildren on board and I was absolutely worn out. They insisted on playing with me all the time and I didn’t want to disappoint them. We played catch, hide and seek and other games and everywhere they went, even if it was to the loo, I went as well - just to keep an eye on them of course, and gosh, can’t they talk. They never come up for air or give you a moments peace.

When I got home it took me a couple of days to recover – funnily enough Dave and Geraldine said the same.

This is my third season sailing and I am looking forward to visiting all the old haunts and some new places as well. I love being on board the boat, lazing in the sun, feeling the wind ruffling my ears and taking in the smells on the breeze, but if I’m really honest, the thing I love most about sailing is mooring, running down my ramp and finding the nearest place to lift my leg and play with my tennis ball.

I hope you all have a good season this year and, when I see you round the marina, I’ll give you a wag of my tail and let you have a throw of my ball.

Love from Max
Stargazer

The Calais Rally 2004

29th to 31st May

David Knight *Dionysus*

The weekend of the Spring Bank Holiday is usually the Calais Rally and those of you who have not heard of it, or joined in, will be surprised to learn that this is a multi-club event organised by the Little Ship Club. It was started right back in 1927 and has been run every year since, excluding the war years.

This year we had 5 boats from the Cruising Club and 3 boats from the Sailing Club. For the purposes of this event, the two clubs sail under the 'Tollesbury' banner as the club with the most boats is awarded

a rather nice trophy. 'Tollesbury', was not very well represented this year, due to the unsettled weather a few days before, and a not a very promising forecast for the weekend. These fears proved to be unfounded and, in fact, we had a good crossing in both directions.

Sailing to **Calais**, crossing the Thames Estuary, and then crossing the Shipping Lane have certain difficulties but, with a reliable GPS and good visibility, it is relatively straightforward, in so much that I did it several times in my trusty 23ft *Amethyst*! A convenient fact is that if you leave Tollesbury at High Water you can arrive at Calais 10-

12 hours later and thus do not have to wait too long for the lock to the *Bassin de l'Ouest* to open.

Saturday morning dawned reasonably bright with a steady force 4-5 from the SSW. *Dionysus* made good way in these conditions and I was keen to show Robin, Jean and Paul, on *Polo IV*, my preferred route across the sandbanks. Most of the club seem to cross the **Sunk Sands** near to the **Middle Sunk**, then pass through **Fisherman's Gat**, now that the **SW Sunk** appears to be silted, and the **Edinburgh Channel** is no longer marked. However, now I sail a fin-

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first race

water/Colne estuary, with the racing and navigation buoys marked. We were to find out which of the possible courses we were to use on Saturday morning.

Early Starts

High water on Saturday was at 0630, so we were up at 0600. My other crew, Tony, arrived at 0615 and we left the marina at 0700. Breakfast was in West Mersea, on a buoy, and over by 0830. We set off to get some practice with the new crew and boat combination before the start at 1000, stopping briefly to rescue a runaway tender, which had escaped from its owner onboard a small motor cruiser.

We called the Maldon Little Ship Club committee boat to let them know we were intending to race and asked for the course. We were told it would be announced at 0930. We continued our practice

with a number of tacks and gybes and the new crew were soon working well together. 0930 soon arrived and the course was announced; the start was to be between **Nass beacon** and a yellow racing mark to the south, initially heading west. We waited for the 10 minute warning sound signal and didn't hear a thing; nor the 5 minute signal at 0955. By then I decided to follow the fleet, approximately 30 boats, over the line at 1000. Being amongst (though slightly behind) so many boats sailing in very close quarters, was very exciting and not a little scary. In fact, I understand, there was at least one bump between the lead boats. The first mark was a yellow racing buoy named **Woodwork** which was to windward and involved a tack to round it. All the boats were still very close together. We choose to hold back, preferring to lose a place rather risk a bump.

The rest of the race lasted around 3 hours over a course which turned

at **Inner Bench Head** and over about 15 miles. We took part in a few little fights for 'water' at buoys but lost lots of ground in the downwind legs as we do not have a spinnaker. It was, however, a wonderful sight to see many of the other boats flying theirs. The wind throughout the race was an ideal force 4 to 5 and the occasional shower didn't spoil the day. We were one of the last boats to pass through the finish line but, on handicap, we came 20th out of the 27 boats that started, a result we were pleased with, especially after such an enjoyable day.

Overall I would definitely recommend trying a club race even if you're not the 'racing sort'. It's a good way to sharpen your sailing skills and great fun.

David Cooke
Nimrodel

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Calais Memories

keeled boat and do not liking the thought of crossing a large stretch of sand on a falling tide, with little room for error. I now sail further up the **East Swin**, with the strong following ebb all the way out to where the **Little Sunk** used to stand. Then I turn on to a course that drops straight into **Foulgers Gat**, and a bearing for **N. Foreland**. My sophisticated computer software, which allows for the tides, informs me that this route is only 10 minutes longer than the **Sunk/Fisherman's Gat** route, but is well worth it as there is more water under the keel and more sea room.

Sadly, after crossing the **Sunk Sands** the wind was directly on our bow, so we motored towards **N. Foreland** and the **Goodwins**. During this part of the passage the wind completely dropped so we ended up motor-sailing the rest of the way.

What a surprise I had when we

passed through the lock and into the marina at **Calais**. They have done a magnificent job in extending the facilities and, instead of only the previous 3 pontoons, they have added further pontoons marked A to K. This was a blessing as I do not like rafting up and so was able to find one of the many empty berths with speed and ease. Not bad when you consider there were over 120 boats visiting that weekend!

On Sunday morning there was a civil reception in a marquee, where the Benfleet Sailing Club took the honours again, with 18 boats. More notable, however, was the larger number of clubs attending this year. When Tollesbury was mentioned, Ernie from *Andromeda* shot up to the podium and proved that his French was as non-existent as mine. Everything crystallised, however, when it became clear how much he seemed to relish kissing the elegant French madam, who was giving out the prizes. With this enthusiasm, he gets my nomination for

next years committee.

That evening, the TCC members banded together for an excellent meal in a restaurant overlooking the beach, witnessing a glorious sun setting over the sea. This was a great celebration, as some of our intrepid members had to make their way home the next morning.

Fortunately, the crew of *Polo IV* and myself had another day on the French side, so we sailed to **Gravelines**, only 10 miles up the coast, to this, often overlooked but beautiful, town, where we had a truly brilliant day

So am I going on the Calais Rally next year? Most certainly, but we need more boats. 'Going foreign' in company is really a lot of fun, giving those who have not done it before lots of confidence. Those old salts among us will be thrilled by the new marina and the big welcome given in **Calais**.

David Knight
Vice-Commodore *Dionysus*

Marina News

Gold Anchors Award

Tollesbury Marina has been awarded a prestigious Four Gold Anchors award for quality.

General News

Improvements and general maintenance continue around the marina. An articulating ramp has been added to the lower end of the bridge to A pontoon. Replacement of the electricity boxes is soon to begin on D pontoon and will then be undertaken on B pontoon once re-decking has been completed. Parts of other pontoons are also to be re-decked, as needed, particularly F pontoon. The car park is also to be resurfaced and the boat park tidied generally.

The Club House

Cost considerations means that the mid-summer ball had to be transformed into a mid-summer dance at the reduced price of £15.00 per head, but it still proved a great success with all those present.

The Club is now operating in full-summer mode. The bar and meals are available seven days a week and barbecues are now being provided on a reasonably regular basis – dates being announced on the blackboard outside the club house and the heated swimming pool is now in full operation.

In the autumn, the outside ladies' WC will be transformed into a family room with full disabled access and builders are currently

being consulted over the details of this reconstruction.

The Granary

There is very good news about The Granary, located at the side of the main slip. This is a Grade 2 listed building which has been in a state of poor repair for some time. Julian Goldie now reports that the Mid-Essex Historic Buildings Trust has just received a grant of near £7,000 to undertake a feasibility study for the restoration of The Granary. If positive, this study could result in a thorough-going restoration of The Granary (at around £100,000) and its availability for use by a range of local organisations.