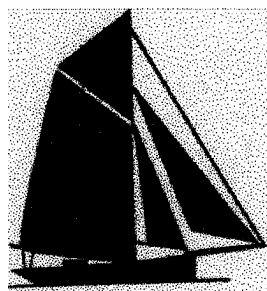


Volume 10, Issue 2, Summer 2005



Up The Creek...

Calais Calls

Readers will see that this edition contains two reports on the Spring rally to Calais. The differing reports of this trip reflects the rapid change in weather conditions that was experienced by participants, including those who felt it better to divert to Ramsgate. The overall messages from these reports is that conditions

can change rapidly; that it is best to voyage when forecasts are at their most benign, even if the timing is less convenient; that a well-found boat will probably survive pretty bad conditions; but that diverting to a well-protected port is often the best option for the majority of small boats when their crews are faced by

strong winds and big seas.

Andy Hobden's comments on being swamped by the Sea Cat are also salutary: a clear warning to stay well clear of these monsters and their unseamanlike skippers.

Barry Jones

Steorra of Tollesbury

Life-Time Achievement Award

It is with great pleasure that we can announce that **Chris Edwards** has been awarded a 'Lifetime Commitment Award' from the Royal Yachting Association. When you meet Chris on the pontoons, you may not realise how far his work extends in voicing the opinions of all who are involved in recreational watercraft and its environment.

Chris is Chairman of the Blackwater and Colne Sailing Protection As-

sociation. He works on the Advisory Group for Wind farms throughout the Thames Area, Essex Estuaries European Marine Sites; is the Environmental Co-ordinator for the RYA East; and is Vice-Chair of RYA East and its Training Panel Chairman.

Apart from these many contributions, he has undertaken extensive good work within our Cruising Club, serving with distinction as both Commodore and Treasurer. Chris

and Joyce Woodman have, for many years, offered *Calidris* as our Committee Boat and have also undertaken many 'rescues'. We all owe Chris a huge 'thank you' for, without his efforts, our freedom to sail could have been severely restricted.

Dave Knight (Vice-Commodore)

Dionysus

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Thespians Afloat?

The Commodore's Appeal

The Wallet Ball Association is made up of several local clubs: TCC, Tollesbury Sailing Club, Maldon Little Ship Club, Wivenhoe Sailing Club, Colne Yacht Club, Bradwell Quay Yacht Club and West Mersea Yacht Club. The association has two main functions: one is for member clubs to race against each other for the **Wallet Shield**; the other is to raise funds for charity by holding a ball.

Each club takes it in turn to organise these annual events – and it will fall to Tollesbury Cruising Club to organise the 2006 fixtures.

The Wallet Ball in particular is

always great fun. As well as the traditional eating, drinking, dancing and raffling of stunning prizes that make up these nights, the highlight of the evening is a little 'cabaret', conceived, written and performed by the host club. Those who have attended a Wallet Ball will know that, while the standard of entertainment is variable, the level of enjoyment of participants and audience is invariably high. The Sailing Committee has already got a few ideas about our cabaret, but we'd love to hear from other club members who might be able to contribute. Whether you can write, sing, play an instrument, or act; or even if

you can't, but are willing to join members of the committee on stage (we can't act either!), or help out behind the scenes, please get in touch. The likelihood is that we will hold regular rehearsals on Sunday evenings throughout the winter.

At the time of writing, we have not yet finalised the date and venue for the Wallet Ball itself, but the provisional date for your diaries is Saturday 4 March.

Contact Betty McInnes (0777 565 3042) for further information or to volunteer.

Buxey Ashes Triumph

TCC won a famous victory in **The Buxey Ashes** in mid June. As the Commodore, Betty McInnes reports:

"We won by four wickets against Maldon Little Ship Club. There was a great turn out, about 20-25

boats between us. Special mention in despatches for the crew of *Navicula Star* who seemed to have some serious cricketers among their number. We lost **The Ladies' Trophy** sadly but as it's the first time we've won the

Ashes since 1997 we were dead chuffed. Perhaps it bodes well for the other **Ashes**?"

Reports and Reflections Wanted

Robin Kemp's discussion of the virtues of conventional lifebuoys on page 7 is an invaluable reflection upon the effectiveness, or otherwise, of this type of equipment. The ubiquity of some kinds of sailing equip-

ment is by no means a guarantee of its usefulness. *Up the Creek* welcomes any discussions of equipment. Equally welcome will be reflections upon sailing techniques, observations on conditions in areas likely to

be frequented by TCC members, and any other musings that might be of interest and/or amusement.

Ed.

The 2005 Calais Rally

Once again Tollesbury Sailing Club and the Cruising Club joined forces to attend the **Calais Rally** hosted by the Little Ship Club.

The crossing to **Calais** was uneventful but the light winds on the nose meant 10 hours of motoring. A very early start at two o'clock in the morning and an eleven-hour passage gave us nearly a whole extra day to stock up with wine and to socialise with the other crews.

As forecast the day eventually warmed up with the arrival of a hot breeze off the land and a swarm of bees, which buzzed around the boats though not in a threatening way.



Nearing North Foreland

We were waiting outside **Calais** for the *Sea Cat* to leave. It put on full power right at the harbour mouth and created an enormous wake, which flooded *Tongue Twister's* decks up to the cockpit coaming, soaking the Autohelm in the process.

There was a lot of floating weed in the Harbour. Many boats got it round their props; we picked up a load, which cut our speed to less than three knots all the way up to the Marina. Some boats had to be towed out of trouble. Fortunately we made it, the bridge was open and we managed to squeeze into a berth beside *Anahita*.

Natterjack and *Dusus* had arrived earlier to prepare for their trip through the French canals. We roped them into the Tollesbury fleet to boost our number for the competition to get the most boats to the rally. Mandy and Anto brought *Nebula* down from Ipswich with David



Calais Marina

Andy Hobden
Tongue Twister

Walkerline's (*Ariel Spirit*) Birthday cake on board.

Crescendo and *Corkscrew* arrived Saturday morning having sailed overnight, giving Tollesbury 13 boats in the Marina. With another half dozen boats expected it was looking good for us to do well but then the wind got up and although the forecast was for 5 to 7 later it was actually gusting force 8.

The wind blew hard all day so we were surprised and impressed to see *Sutomi* moored up in the Basin on Saturday afternoon having had a rough passage. Most of the other Tollesbury boats ended up in **Ramsgate**.

Thanks to *Sutomi* we had a total of fourteen boats and came joint second with two other clubs. Benfleet won again with thirty-four. In total about one hundred and sixty boats attended the Rally.

To avoid the early start home on Monday several boats crossed to Ramsgate on Sunday afternoon. Nigel, single handed on *Anahita* took the much-travelled cake and duly delivered it to *Ariel Spirit* in time for the Birthday. Those that stayed enjoyed a superb meal in a very nice restaurant overlooking the sea.

Monday morning dawned bright and clear for the trip back. With a warm south easterly wind to blow us home, the spinnaker was up, and shorts and T-shirts the order of the day. Relaxing in the cockpit with an ice-cold beer was a perfect way to end the weekend. OK so I can dream!

It was early, about 03:30hours, when we left Calais. It was dark. It was cold. It was raining. What wind we had was on the nose! Again! Don't mention the hang-over. We set the Autohelm and huddled forward in the cockpit to get what shelter we could under the spray hood. About two hours out I needed to alter course to avoid a ship. The Autohelm went Beep, and then died. So we had to sit in the rain steering.

Eventually, it seemed like a lifetime, the rain stopped. We could have sailed in from **The Sunk** but time and tide meant motor sailing.



Second Prize

Andy Hobden
Tongue Twister

Dash to Calais

We'd missed out on the **Calais Rally** in the last couple of seasons, so were very keen to get *Sutomi* ready for this year's trip. We even managed to line up some friends to come along with us: Jim and Diane had done several short trips with us up and down the coast, but they were very excited at the prospect of their first Channel crossing.

The weather forecast of SW 4-5, occ. 6 wasn't brilliant, but we'd pored over the synoptic charts and concluded that there wasn't anything sinister lurking there to give us cause for concern. Everyone else seemed up for it, too. Talking to other crews in the clubhouse on Friday evening, about seven or eight boats were preparing for the 4am start next morning.

And start off early we did, in calm dawn twilight. The wind began to freshen out past the **Spitway**, and we reefed early. Once across the **Sunk**, it freshened even more, and we reefed again. We also took in quite a bit of genoa, and yet again wrote a memo to ourselves to replace the furling gear. It always chooses the worst possible moment to get snarled up round the forestay.

We flew out of **Fisherman's Gat** doing about 7-8 knots over the ground, and realised we were leaving all the other Tollesbury boats in our wake. *Polo IV* appeared besides us at one point, having come round the top of the Sunk. They were on a slightly different bearing and were in the throes of putting in their third reef when we shot past them. They told us later they would have got the video camera out if they hadn't been otherwise engaged, as *Sutomi* was looking pretty impressive at that point. The wind speed was reading anything between 28-38 knots and the boat was in the groove.

We were already past the **North**

Foreland when the tide turned, and by then we were averaging more than 9 knots over the ground. The only trouble was, with the turn of the tide came the big waves. They weren't a problem in themselves: the wind was 60° off the starboard bow and *Sutomi* was riding them comfortably most of the time. It was just so wet! Every now and then we'd take a great big green one right over the top. The worst one however was the sneaky 'up and under' that rode up through the gunnels and drenched the chap on the lee side. Not only that, we discovered later that the water had actually found its way through an air vent in the cubby hole and into the aft cabin, soaking all the bedding.

Meanwhile, on the VHF we could hear all our companions turning off and heading for **Ramsgate**. I think this was the point at which I took a flying leap backwards across the cabin. Fortunately the aft cabin door was lashed against the cooker and cushioned my fall. The only thing that broke was the middle hinge – had the door not been there I'm not sure whether I or the cooker would have come off worse. Fortunately I wasn't hurt at all and resumed my position at the chart table. We were only fourteen miles off **Calais**; the thought of slamming into Ramsgate on the opposite tack wasn't particularly attractive; and to quote the bard, 'returning were as tedious as go o'er'. So we carried on o'er.

The trip was uneventful from there on in; although we were getting tired and wetter. No-one was sick, no-one complained; and in a masochistic sort of way, we might even have been enjoying ourselves. I'm sure that carrying on was the right decision, but there were several lessons to be learned nonetheless. We hadn't really prepared our crew for the possibility

of bad weather; we could definitely have briefed them better (although we always issue life jackets as a matter of routine). We also hadn't prepared rough passage food: fortunately the rough bit was of relatively short duration so we weren't hungry or dehydrated. Even with the reefs in, we discovered that I wasn't strong enough to hold the helm. We have got to address the problem with our genoa furling gear, because although we had shortened sail, a bit more would have made all the difference. It was very wearing for Keith, but his biggest problem was that he didn't have an opportunity to get into his oilies, so was even more exposed to the spray than the rest of us. And finally, after two seasons of sailing without them, we have put our dodgers back on, as they would have given us more protection from those big green ones than we had on the day!

If it was a roller coaster ride to **Calais**, it was dodgems inside the harbour. Even in the 'basin' the wind was funnelling through at 38 knots, and boats were being blown about all over the place. It was a relief to find a berth on the end of a short raft; and even more of a relief when some of the Tollesbury boats already there, started hailing us and calling us over for drinks. Thank you, *Anahita* and *Tongue Twister* for your welcome! In all there were 22 boats from the two Tollesbury clubs. Most people had gone across on the Friday when there was practically no wind at all, so they had already had an opportunity to visit the wine stores and were very relaxed by the time we arrived. It was great to see everyone there, particularly on Sunday morning when I was delighted to be able to accept, on behalf of the Tollesbury clubs, a trophy for having the second highest number of vessels in the 'basin'.

Betty McInnes
Sutomi

Racing News

From
Andy Hobden, Rear-Commodore Racing

The racing season got off to a shaky start with winds at both ends of the spectrum disrupting our plans. **The Easter Egg Challenge**, originally planned as a pas-

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The Easter Egg Challenge

and a tight schedule for the lock.

The race then took place on Easter Sunday when 8 boats found themselves lining up on a very informal start line for a drift with the tide to the **Bradwell Beacon**.

The simple course of 'leave Osea to port' meant that everyone who sailed took part whether they knew it or not.

Polo IV took line honours and timed everyone home. The light winds and strong tide suited the slower boats. *Mykonos* had a well-deserved victory, with *Corkscrew* second and *Grace Jones* third.

The wind was howling on the 7th May for the **Pursuit Race**. With winds up to gale force being forecast the decision was made to abandon the race. Those that drove round to **Shotley** said that the conditions there were atrocious so it was a good call.

The race will now be run on the 27th August at the start of the late summer cruise.

The Teapot Trophy, held on the 21st May, was run as a pursuit race. Nine boats started with *Even Now*, the slowest boat in the fleet starting at 11:30am and *Crescendo*, Sandra and Ernie's beautiful Oyster 45 starting some thirty minutes or so later.

The fresh southerly breeze deterred all the boats except for one idiot (it wasn't Wendy's fault) from flying their spinnakers.

From the back of the fleet it appeared as if all the boats were closing on each other nicely. The faster boats were able to work their way through the fleet. Maggs on *Mimosa* revelled in the conditions and took the race for the second year running. *Zingari* performed well to hold second place. Most of us had a

chance to admire *Crescendo* as she powered past us but *Stargazer* held on to keep third place by a mere 15 seconds.

Many thanks to Godfrey for the use of *Karma* as committee boat and for Chris Edwards's sterling duties as OOD. The pursuit race format seemed to be well liked and feedback would be appreciated with a view to doing the same next year.

Three boats entered for the all female-crewed **Boudica Trophy** this year. Unfortunately the wind was howling again and with squall after squall coming through all night and not much sign of a let up in the morning the decision was made to cancel the race.

The Boudica Trophy was moved to the 9th July, the day before the **Mersea Fish Shed Lunch**.

The Wallet Shield and probably **The Wallet Long Race** will also have been and gone by the time you read this.

It looks like *Wivenhoe* SC's **Oostende Rally** and **North Sea Race** will happen. Dates are still to be confirmed, but probably July 29th as published. We have already had several expressions of interest from mem-



Crescendo – 'A stern chase is a long chase'

bers so watch the notice board for more details

It's nice to have some new faces taking part this year, the more the merrier, only three of the available twenty one prizes have been won so far, so there is still plenty to race for.

Remember that TCC races are open to all club members with boats with sails. Don't worry about handicaps as we can sort one out for any boat.

Good racing!

Andy Hobden
Rear Commodore (Racing)
Tongue Twister

Wallet Shield Race - 2005

This year the **Wallet Shield Race** was held on the 18th June, and is the most competitive race that we enter. This is probably due to it being an inter club race between Bradwell Quay Yacht Club, Tollesbury Sailing Club, Wivenhoe Sailing Club, Colne Yacht Club, Maldon Little Ships Club and ourselves. The trophy is awarded to the club that gets the fastest 3 boats, on handicap, across the line.

It was about 5 years ago that Tollesbury last won this trophy, and I was looking forward to us fielding a good team. *Dionysus* was lucky to have strong crew in the shape of Paul Kemp, and Paul Noyland, (affectionately known as 'Sheffield Paul', which has nothing to do with his lack of height.)

The organising club was **Bradwell Quay**, and they raised a few

eye-brows at the incredibly short start line, but once they had got that sorted, and announced that was going to be the long course, we knew we were in for a good race. Thirty boats crossed the start line. Sadly, however, we only had a small team of four boats, and this restricted our hopes for the trophy.

Basically the course was fairly straight forward and resulted in a beat all the way out to the Wallet No 3, then a Spinnaker run home. The weather for once exceeded expectations with mainly 10 –12 knots of wind and lots of sunshine; the suntan lotion being regularly needed.

That evening **Bradwell Quay** hosted the prize giving. There might have been something of a mix up on their part, as their club-house was full of visiting clubs from the Rivers Roach and

Crouch. However, once these visitors had had their prize giving, it was announced that **Maldon Little Ships** would this year retain the Trophy. Much to our amazement it was also announced that *Dionysus* was first on handicap. The other club boats did not fare so well, with Stewart Wallace in his 'Najad', sadly having a false start, from which he never recovered.

Next year it is our turn to organise the **Wallet Ball** and, therefore also, the race, so, hopefully, we will field a much larger team in an attempt to get our name back on that trophy. Each year I have competed in this race it has never disappointed, but has always been challenging and fun.

Andy Hobden
Tongue Twister

Local Scenes (1) - The Yacht Stores



It's Your Life, Buoy!

WANTED: Set of instructions for a Horseshoe Lifebuoy

I am being serious. Deadly serious. Has anyone ever seen instructions packed with a horseshoe lifebuoy? I am not talking about *The Life Sling* or its many derivatives; these come with clear instructions printed on their containers. No, what I am on about is your 'common or garden' horseshoe, seen decorating the sterns of the majority of pleasure craft - ours included. I have been sailing for years and I cannot ever recall having seen instructions on how they should be used.

I can imagine now what many of you are thinking. Kemp has finally flipped! Why would you need instructions for something as basic as a lifebuoy? Surely you put it around your chest and then do the 'doggy paddle' until you are either rescued or drown - right? Wrong!. Well at least in the case of our particular example, which has decorated the stern of *Polo IV* for the last fourteen years, you would be wrong.

We fitted our boat out when she was new and, like most people, we included a horseshoe for the stern. I did not give much thought to the matter as it was a small part of the 'must have' items and we have carried it ever since. From memory, the buoy was packed in a plain polythene bag without any manufacturer's identification and was available in one size only; One-size-only sort of thing, only it doesn't! That is my first point.

Bum's Up?

I am ashamed to say that, after all these years, it was only recently that I gave the lifebuoy any serious thought. I tried wearing it, if that is how you would describe it. I tried

it around my chest, under my arms, but with no chance. It would not even go around my waist. The thing is totally rigid, with a core of polystyrene. The best that I was able to achieve was to wear it sideways over one hip. Imagine the result of wearing it in this fashion - being pulled out of the sea, drowned with your bum in the air!

So, if you do not wear the lifebuoy, what do you do with it? Presumably you ride it, a bit like a surfer on a body board. With this in mind I had a close look at our model. It has a thin rope around its circumference, which bridges the open end of the horseshoe shape, with the rope fastened at the midpoint of the open end by a two part plastic clip.

Let us then consider an emergency situation. You are in the sea and probably in a bit of a panic. You receive a thrown lifebuoy. You then have to find and undo the fastening clip. Then you have to get on the buoy and keep it in place whilst you reach behind your back to find the ends of the line and fasten the strap. A bit like doing up a bra with your head underwater, I would imagine, and not very likely to succeed.

Have I got it wrong? Am I being unfair? Have I got the only lifebuoy in the country designed for a five-year-old contortionist?

In the Drink!

The next question that I would like answered is how should these things be deployed? To illustrate my point, picture the following scenario. You are heading up *The Wallet* with a following South Westerly Force 6, Autohelm in control and with the crew down

below making a cup of Bovril. Skipper goes up onto the side deck to adjust the Genoa fairlead. A rogue wave gets under the stern, the mainsail gybes and sweeps the skipper into the water. The crew rush up, grabs the lifebuoy and throws it towards the skipper, who is now 50 yards astern. The wind catches the lifebuoy and returns it to the cockpit faster than Rolf Harris's boomerang. Right or wrong? Our lifebuoy is as light as a feather. There is no way it could be thrown into any strong wind.

Consider another scenario. The yacht is tacking down **The Wallet**, punching into the same South Westerly Force 6. The crew is again down below making the Bovril. The skipper is relieving himself from the side deck when he slips and goes overboard. The crew rushes onto the deck, grabs the lifebuoy and throws it towards the skipper. This time, with the benefit of the wind, the buoy, the aim proves good and it hits the water within 5 yards of the casualty. The skipper swims towards the lifebuoy at 2 knots, whilst the lifebuoy disappears downwind at 4, just like a child's beachball. Without some form of drogue, a lifebuoy will move across the water faster than you can swim after it.

Am I being unfair? Is there a good case for carrying the ubiquitous horseshoe? Does anyone have experience of a real-life rescue where one has actually worked? Seriously, I would like to know. In the interim, I will keep on carrying ours just in case we come across a five year old contortionist in distress (in a flat calm?, ed.)

Robin Kemp
Polo IV

Shallow Draft Boats to Wivenhoe

New Ventures and New Opportunities

Thus far, the planned trip for shallow draft boats to **Wivenhoe SC** at the beginning of the season turned out to be the big non-event of the season. The main reason for the cancellation of this event was the very thick fog that descended on Tollesbury Friday night (I should have realised that it was the 1st of April - April Fool's day). I carefully listened to the weather forecast that night (well early morning) and the early morning one. Both were still forecasting fog and the trip was going to involve an early morning start (about 6am due to HW at Tollesbury). I felt that it was bad enough to be caught out in fog. However, given that I was going to be sailing single handed and that a large part of the trip was going to involve close quarter work, setting out when it was going to be foggy would have been foolish. Only one other boat in the marina had signed up, so, after listening to the weather forecast and giving the whole trip some thought, I walked down 'D' pontoon to where Andy

berths his motor sailor *Even Now*, discussed the forecast and decided not to go. Three others had already cancelled, but what I didn't know was Mike from *Corkscrew* was already out there. I went back to bed only to be woken later that morning by a phone call from Mike (*Corkscrew*) to ask where we were and if the trip was still on. He was happily telling me that the fog never happened; hind-sight is a marvellous thing.

On talking to Wivenhoe SC about the aborted trip, they told me that they were having problems with their moorings at present as they had won approval from the EU for a £30,000.00 grant towards the cost of installing new pontoons. It was probably just as well that we did not go.

The new pontoons will be intended for use mainly by visitors who will be able to moor alongside for up to 24 hours free of charge. The club already has a pontoon attached to two large piles driven into the riverbed. Two extra posts have already been in-

stalled; the new pontoons will form an 'H' on its side with the open ends up and down stream. The new berthing will provide eight berths inside the 'H' and up to three medium sized boats should be able to moor on the outer side of the 'H'. This work is expected to be completed, later in the summer. I am planning to keep an eye on the developments and will try to arrange another date later in the season when we could try again to sample the delights of **Wivenhoe**. If anybody has more up-to-date information please keep me informed. I can easily be found on yacht *Diana* on pontoon D32 and, if I am not there, just leave a note for me on the club notice board or phone on 07971859151. When I am able to firm up a new date, I will use the club's directory to notify shallow draft boat owners.

Peter Philpot
Diana

Chandlery Chat

Topless Mariners Beware!

Long serving staff in the Clubhouse and the marina office/chandlery have pretty well 'seen it all' over the years. Sometimes they wish they hadn't!

Rumblings from both areas suggest that topless

male mariners can cause some aesthetic distress. Clubhouse staff have been asked to impose a 'cover up' dress rule. Hard pressed staff in the office and chandlery would, it would seem, welcome the same.