



U p t h e

That Sinking Feeling!



“Floating” pontoon no more

Brightlingsea Pontoon Under Water!

What better excuse for a pontoon party than a very special lady’s special birthday?

Joyce Woodham has been associated with Tollesbury Cruising Club for many years and served her term as Commodore back in the early 90s. Many members of the club know her well and in April were delighted to help her celebrate a milestone birthday in true Tollesbury style on the pontoon at Brightlingsea. So many of us crowded on to the main pontoon to imbibe with Joyce that we managed to sink it under the weight of the assembled crowd! Harbour Master Bernie Hetherington has known Joyce since she first started sailing some

thirty years ago and was amongst the revellers. He seemed not to be the slightest bit perturbed to see his pontoon taking a dip in the Colne. There have obviously been many such occasions and will be many more to come I am sure! Especially if Tollesbury Cruising Club is involved that is.

Ray and Debbie (*Aloha*) organised a beautiful cake and everyone got a piece.

Joyce now keeps *Calidris* in Maldon where she lives but often joins up with old friends from Tollesbury. She was delighted to see so many familiar faces. It was a night to remember for all of us.



Hilary Morgan

Joyce (centre) celebrates with crew of *Amy Louise*



No birthday party would be complete without a cake!

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Commodore's Corner



Well another issue - this one with a bit of looking back and a bit of looking forward. More than half way through the summer, half way through the season? That depends.

So what do we think of it so far? A bit of a mixed bag in terms of the weather. The Easter Cruise was, as one of my good sailing friends would say, "a bit 'b***dy character building". Well done to those who joined in the circuit of the Blackwater and Colne estuaries. The dinner at 'The Old Ship' in Heybridge was pretty straight forward as I remember it – we drove there! (See Rolo the Labrador's account of the humans' goings on page 10 - Editor)



The trip up to the Orwell was also a bit of an endurance event. Cold, rain and was it really 42 kts of northerly that chased us down the Wallet?



The London trip over the Whitsun week was a great success with all enjoying the big city. I believe there will be an account in the autumn edition. Then the sun came out for the Goldie Challenge. A great meal out in good company and a memorable evening with about forty members and crew enjoying a meal in the Royal Burnham Yacht Club's main dining room.

The Steve Rix Race to Ramsgate – more characters built I understand.... (see Andy and Jo's account on page 6)

The lovely weather returned in time for the Family Dinghy/ Fun day, though it was quite breezy at first on the way round to Mersea Stone. Lots of swimming and dinghy sailing and interesting watercraft demos from Andy Abraham. (see below) The

Summer Charity Ball proved to be a fantastic event.

Half way through the season and we still have the Teddy Bear race/Howlett trophy, the Kings Head Cup round Osea island race, Buxey ashes cricket match and the Summer Cruises to come. I'm really looking forward to four weeks afloat and hopefully reaching the Channel Islands. The Late Summer cruise is always a great event which we hope to start with the rearranged Pursuit race.

Enjoy the photos and the rest of the summer!

**David Cooke
Commodore**



Photos of Family Fun Day

Sunset at Mersea Stone
Rhys Gets a Tow
Jack and Rhys put the Spitfire through its paces
Andy's little red number!

Ray's Racing Roundup

Burnham or Bust

The season is underway with two races completed at the time of writing. Nine boats were on the start line for **The Goldie Challenge**, with others making the journey to enjoy the evening meal in The Royal Burnham.

The race started in extremely light winds and the possibility of everyone sailing to Burnham was looking doubtful. However, the wind soon filled in and the fleet embarked upon the long windward leg towards The Swin. A close battle developed between *Aloha* and *Polo IV* at the front of the fleet to be first to Whitaker no.6. Thereafter, a splash of colour was evident as most of the fleet hoisted spinnakers in the race for the finish line.

The evening had a grand setting in the RBYC dining room with over forty Cruising Club members dining around an extremely large table. The handicaps were

applied and the race results were announced.

1 st	<i>Dionysus</i>	D. Knight
2 nd	<i>Polo IV</i>	R. Kemp
3 rd	<i>Aloha</i>	R. Apthorp

With notable performances from *Scallywag*, *Aerial Spirit* and *Wavedancer*.

High Wind Performer

The second race was **The Steve Rix Trophy**, Ramsgate the destination. The forecast was not favourable with a strong wind warning in place. However, five boats crossed the start line on a downwind dash to the North Foreland taking around six hours.

It was a great race with the whole fleet finishing within fifteen minutes of the first boat. Andy on *Dualin* proved that he is a high wind performer, winning by six minutes on handicap with more consistent results from

Aerial Spirit and *Dionysus* finishing second and third respectively.

José on *Scallywag* must have had a wet ride as his Dehler has less freeboard than the others. David on *Toucan Tango* put in a good show in the absence of a windward leg which would most probably have been a real advantage to a large boat in these conditions.

As for the journey home - Force 5 on the nose, a two metre swell - I will leave it to your imagination!

1 st	<i>Dualin</i>	A. Abraham
2 nd	<i>Ariel Spirit</i>	M. Reed
3 rd	<i>Dionysus</i>	D. Knight

A good season for racing so far. Keep the entries coming for future events.

Ray Apthorp
Rear Commodore Racing

A l o h a

Waving not Drowning

Would you know how to identify whether someone was just splashing around or whether they were actually drowning? Beryl Hodgson (*Dipper*) recently came across an interesting post on the 'Yachting and Boating World' website. It highlights the fact that drownings are often portrayed in films and on TV with lots of struggling and splashing when in fact the opposite is more likely. We all spend a lot of time around water and should learn to recognise the signs that someone is in mortal danger.

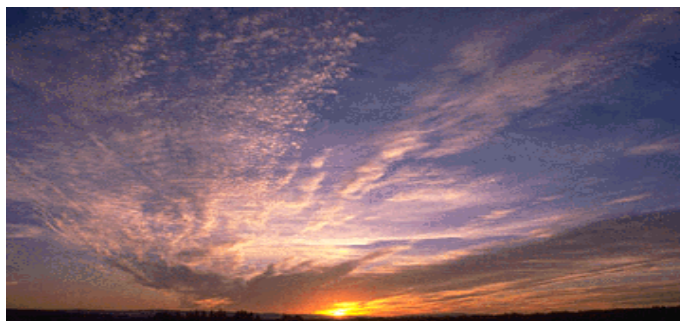
According to the YBW post, a person who is drowning does not splash around and make a noise. Calling out for help once the drowning response has taken over is not an option and the victim remains more or less vertical in the water. If your man overboard can answer you when you call to him he is not drowning (yet). If he cannot and has a blank stare, you have less than 30 seconds to get to him.

The full article is to be found on the YBW website. You can follow the link below. I strongly recommend you do, it's fascinating. I would like to thank Beryl very much for bringing it to our attention.

<http://gcaptain.com/maritime/blog/drowning/?10981>

Editor

Mid Season Update



Cruising Programme 2010

July	31st	Start of Summer Cruise - Holland/France	
August	1st	Buxey Ashes (on Mersea Stone if conditions not suitable)	
	1st to 15th	Summer Cruise - Holland/France	
	14th August	The King's Head Cup Race	
	20th to 22nd	Friday night sail to Brightlingsea, up to Rowhedge on Sunday	
	28th to 29th Aug	Pursuit Race to Pye End, joining with the Late Summer Cruise	
	28th to 5th Sept	Late Summer Cruise - East Coast	
September	11th to 12th	Wallet Long Race	
	25th to 26th	Teapot and Howlett Trophy Race and Boudica Race (Ladies Weekend)	
October	16th to 17th	Autumn Boatshow	
	30th	Laying Up supper	
	31st	AGM - 11:00hrs	
November	6th	Fireworks at Brightlingsea	
December	4th	Christmas Cruise / Frostbite race	

The Committee hope that there is something here to appeal to everyone. Obviously we will do our best to stick to the programme but sometimes the weather or other events are out of our control may make it necessary to change the details and even the destination of some events. Please keep an eye on the website and noticeboard for any updates.

Mid-Season Cruising Summary

Easter Cruise Gets Season off to a Cracking Start

This year's cruising season got off to a great start with the **Blackwater Cruise**, the highlight of which was dinner on the Saturday night in the pub on the lock at Heybridge. We filled the restaurant, numbers being bolstered by many members who made the trip by land but an excellent turn out of boats made this event an excellent start to the season. My thanks to Rob and Charlotte for their usual immaculate organisation.

When is Titchmarsh not Titchmarsh?

The trip to Titchmarsh ended up visiting Shotley, Titchmarsh being unable to accommodate us due to a rally of large boats who were visiting them from ...Shotley...very adventurous! I guessed correctly that Shotley would have plenty of room for us! A meal in the Bristol Arms concluded this short but pleasant weekend. My thanks to Ian for taking the lead on this one on the day.

May Day Fun in the Orwell

The Orwell Trip over the May Day bank holiday was led by Dave Cooke and took in the bright lights and attractions of Ipswich and Levington. Thanks to all participants - there were eight boats attending.

London Calling

A fantastic build up by Rob and Charlotte to the Whitsun trip to London promised to make this one of the year's highlights. I believe there is to be an account of this cruise in a future edition

of 'Up the Creek' which will give further details of what they got up to. Thanks to all who participated and to Rob and Charlotte for all their hard work.

Musical Boats

The Hamford Water Safari supper weekend was a great success again. I've prepared a short summary of the event which you'll find later in this edition. In spite of the World Cup, we achieved good numbers and this event is now firmly established as a regular in the calendar.

Family Fun in the Sun

The family fun day in late June started with a constant F5 for the sail around to Mersea Stone but the wind abated later in the day and apprehensions about anchoring dwindled. The dinghies were launched and several crews were seen taking advantage of the warm weather to swim off the back of their boats. The fine evening led onto a splendid BBQ and bonfire on the beach, rounders, kite sailing and a glorious sail back on Sunday.

Halfway through the season and July seems to be mainly racing but please remember that these events normally include a Cruise one way or another so if you want to sail in company and enjoy the camaraderie after the race, please feel free to join in and enter your names. You never know, you may just win! (If you are nice to Ray he might give you a favourable handicap).

Here Comes Summer

The Summer Cruise is intended to be a consensus event. Dave Cooke is collating all the names of people interested in joining a sail across to the continent, inevitably the final destination will depend on the weather but if you want to take part please enter your name on the form on the Notice Board or visit the Forum.

Enjoy the rest of your season. Hope to see you on the water soon.

Geoff Cooch
Rear Commodore Cruising

B r e e z e r



The 'Maxi' Rank

Moonshine, Rose Tyler and Quicksilver at Ipswich Haven

Steve Rix Passage Race

Saturday 29 May 2010

Andy Abraham and the appropriately named Jo Courage do battle with the elements in the Thames Estuary.

Good Advice?

Having been advised by a fellow TCC member not even to attempt the trip to Ramsgate with the weather that was forecast, we (Andy, Jo and Allen) arose early on Saturday morning and motored *Dualin* to the Nass for the 6.30 start of the 2010 Steve Rix Passage Race.

Sails were raised in preparation but as we were getting ready David (*Dionysus*) informed us that it would be delayed as one of the competitors, who shall remain nameless to save his embarrassment, had misjudged the time it would take to get from the marina to the Nass and was about ¼ hour short.

Countdown to Catastrophe

The countdown to the start commenced. 10 minutes...engine off; 5 minutes...we set the sails and timed our approach to the start line; 1 minute...we wait...we wait some more...60 seconds pass...nothing was heard...120 seconds pass...GO!! Unfortunately the unexpected extra minute meant that the perfect start we were aiming for did not go quite to plan. We gybed just as the shout for the race start was heard, the boom hit Allen, the main sheet caught him round the neck (he spent the weekend with a weeping rope burn) and his hat

ended up in the water. We tried to recover the hat using our man overboard drill, but sadly failed. Let's hope we are more successful when it's a real man!

Ariel Spirit also had troubles with the start and despite our about turn, we managed to cross the start line just ahead of them. We then sailed out to NW Knoll with *Ariel Spirit* in the lee of our sails, allowing us to take the advantage as we were on the windward side. We eventually took up our 'usual' slot, at the back of the pack, but were managing to keep everyone in sight.

Ghost Buoy

The original route was: NW Knoll-Starboard, Wallet Spitway-Starboard, Swin Spitway-Port, Barrow No.2-Starboard, Long Sand Inner-Starboard, Long Sand Outer-Port, Finish Line Broadstairs Knoll to Starboard.

David had added some extra markers to the route in case the weather dictated an earlier finish and one of these, Outer Tongue, caused much consternation amongst the lead boats when they failed to find it. Even the most up to date chart still had it shown but we believe that it is no longer there....well, we couldn't find it.

The wind was a lovely North Westerly, 5 – 7 but we found that with the motion of the waves we were unable to sail comfortably on a dead run, especially as the boom seemed to have taken a bit of a shine to Allen, so started tacking on a broad reach. We are aware that some of our fellow competitors became slightly concerned that we appeared to be heading in the wrong direction but it was all part of our grand tactical plan, honest!

Fly Past

The highlight of the race was the Red Arrows performing a spectacular air display right over our heads as we headed across the Thames Estuary towards Margate. What a sight! They were followed by a Lancaster. Truly awesome! We could quite happily have sat there all day watching the show but sadly the male crew members remembered that they were actually in the middle of a race.

We crossed the finish line in last position but were happy with how *Dualin* had coped in the conditions. We were very pleased to be moored up in Ramsgate 49 nm and 6 hours after leaving Tollesbury.

A leisurely afternoon of showers, gin, olives and cashew nuts

followed before all the crews met in the Royal Temple Yacht Club. Once all were assembled David read out the results (adjusted for handicaps) and we were completely dumbstruck to learn that we were 1st, closely followed by *Ariel Spirit*. We all then went for a meal to celebrate in a Persian restaurant.

Rock and Roll Return

Sunday morning dawned. The wind had not dropped or changed direction. We left the safety of our berth and motored out into a witch's cauldron of bubbling, foaming sea.

Wishing she'd caught the train home, Jo hid below whilst the men did battle with the harbour entrance. Sails up to try and pin the boat in the water, we set a course with the wind just off the nose.

We have since been told that the pitch and roll of the waves was not particularly violent. Try telling that to the various crew members



Scallywag - Now you see us

from several of the boats who were left seriously debilitated by the motion of the ocean. Not a trip we wish to repeat in a hurry. All the other boats went through Foulger's Gat, but as usual we were different and went through Fisherman's Gat and across the Sunk (very strange now that the beacon is no longer there).

Thankfully, once the other side of the Sunk, we were able to bear away, the seas calmed down and the sun even came out. Once we passed through the Swin it was completely calm compared with what we had experienced earlier.

12 hours after leaving Ramsgate we were safely tucked in our berth eating the first food of the day.

Whilst the conditions were not ideal we learnt a lot about how *Dualin* sails in heavy seas. The crews of *Dionysus*, *Skallywag*, *Toucan Tango* and *Ariel Spirit*, should all give themselves a pat on the back for surviving the ordeal of the return trip.



..... Now you don't!
Andy Abraham & Jo Courage

D u a l i n

Safari Supper 2010

**A lovely evening, great food, good friends.
Who could ask for more? Geoff Cooch reports.**

Lucky with the weather

The weather looked grim for a bash up the Wallet for that weekend. Winds from the north gave a portent of a noisy motor up. *Nimrodel* and *Dualin* had gone up on the midnight tide Friday and *Polo IV* was returning from a holiday up the Orwell. They were already tucked in and awaiting the arrival of the rest of the fleet later in the day. *Otteau* set off first having the advantage of a shallow draught followed by the rest of the fleet (minus one) at high water. *Dionysus* had throttle cable problems exiting her berth and got no further than the

slipway. Luckily, as is often the case at Tollesbury, there were plenty of willing hands ready to assist and rescue.

The wind turned to a favourable direction after all on Saturday and all the fleet had a great sail up with the direction changing yet again for the final run in behind the Naze and on to Pye End.

Planned with Precision

All boats were safely in place in Hamford Water by 1630hrs, plenty of time to prepare for the evening's so-

cialising. Each boat had an itinerary of where they would be fed and at what time and at 18:30 on the dot the buzz of outboards echoed amongst the song of the oyster catchers and the guests arrived on their allocated boats for the starter course. It was quite windy and there were a few wet bums on the journey but the hosts for starters made their guests very welcome, throats were duly oiled and the conversation flowed.

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Internet Afloat

TCC's own Webmaster - Colin Shead - updates us on the available options when using our computers on board for a whole host of tasks.

Lots of boat owners now routinely use laptops aboard for navigation (i.e. hooked up to a GPS with charting software) and it is also becoming possible to enjoy fast Internet access aboard at a sensible cost. This means that, amongst other things, you can access long term weather forecasts, including synoptic charts, as well as keeping in touch via e-mail with family and friends.

Here are a few things to be considered if you are taking your laptop aboard so that you can use e-mail and access the web.

You have a choice of how to connect - WiFi or mobile broadband.

WiFi at Marinas and some Harbours

Most laptops have WiFi adaptors included or you can simply buy a USB adaptor to use. Many marinas offer WiFi services. The cost is typically £5 a day, less (per day) for longer periods. Because these services come from a variety of providers, it is often not possible to 'roam' very much from one location to another. Hence although they can work really well, they can be quite expensive to use unless you are staying put for a while. One or two marinas offer free WiFi services, for example Shotley Marina.

Mobile Broadband

All the major mobile phone service providers (O2, Vodafone, 3 and T-Mobile etc) now have broadband 'dongles' on offer. Before you choose, you need to think about

what sort of service is available in your normal cruising area.

Originally all data services were so called 2G (second generation). This is now almost universally available wherever you can get a mobile phone signal but it is very slow for anything but the most basic e-mail and web browsing applications. Not entirely unusable but expect to wait a minute or more for a web page to load.

Currently being rolled out is the 3G (third generation) service. This provides much faster connections and in my experience is not much different from regular broadband at home. All 3G dongles will revert to 2G if they cannot receive a usable 3G signal. Note though, that updating virus checkers and other software can be very problematic on 2G. I have set automatic updates on my laptop for everything to 'off' and update manually only when I have a good 3G signal or when the laptop is at home on regular broadband.

BUT there is a big BUT. The providers are obviously much more interested in deploying 3G to the big cities and towns where there are lots of 'city gents' who are wanting fast access to the Internet and are prepared to pay for it. However all is not lost. The providers all now offer PAYG (pay as you go) services which are viable for occasional access. For example on my T-Mobile dongle 1 day costs £2, 1 week £7 and a month £15. The providers are now also deploying 3G quite rapidly to countryside

areas. Be careful if you sail outside the UK as overseas data charges are very high indeed! If you plan to spend a lot of time abroad it will pay to buy a dongle (or new SIM card) locally.

The obvious question is "will I be able to get 3G?" The first port of call is the coverage diagrams provided on the web by all the major players. I looked at them all and for my usual cruising area on the East Coast (essentially from the Medway to the Deben with occasional 'excursions' outside this area) T-Mobile came out on top. In fact, although the 'declared' coverage still looked to be patchy in the harbours and marinas I normally use, I have found that in practice, performance was rather better than the coverage diagrams indicated. Not quite universal, but pretty good nonetheless.

As an experiment for a year, The East Coast Pilot web site is now starting to list marinas, harbours and mooring locations where good, bad or indifferent mobile broadband is achievable from the different providers.

In some areas you may have difficulty getting any coverage but you would be unlucky (or sail in a very remote location) if one of the providers was not able to provide a service you could use.

The Hardware – What does it cost?

PAYG dongles cost from about £20 and are often offered on special deals. For example I bought my

T-Mobile dongle from Tesco for £19.97 which included £10 of air-time. Installation is straightforward. Most dongles just plug into a USB port on your PC and automatically load the software required.

I bought a high quality five metre USB extension lead so that I could position the dongle where the signal strength was strongest. This can be important in marinas where there is a forest of masts blocking the signal! On occasions I have found that hoisting on a halyard to gain extra height pays handsome dividends, especially on the more remote moorings and anchorages (for example Ramsholt on the Deben).

Topping up arrangements are similar to those for mobile phones. You get a top up card for use at a local retailer or you can top up online once you have a credit card registered.

If you plan to use your laptop a lot on board with no access to shore power, you can easily buy 12 volt power 'bricks' that will power and charge your laptop from the yacht battery. I paid about £20 for a generic pack that works really well. Just make sure that the pack you buy is compatible with your particular

laptop - voltages and connectors do vary.

E-mail Access

If you have a PC at home you will probably have a regular e-mail account already set up using an e-mail client such as Outlook Express. These are commonly known as POP3 accounts. You can normally configure these for access via mobile broadband but it is very often quite complicated. A much easier option is to use web based e-mail such as googlemail or hotmail. Personally I use googlemail all the time; it is free to use and has superb spam filtering and virus checking facilities that are truly second to none. Unless you are prepared to struggle with e-mail account set up (or are really confident about configuring e-mail systems) I suggest you set up a googlemail (or other web based e-mail service) account to use when afloat. You will probably find that it is easy to have your regular e-mail account forwarded to your web mail account automatically. You may, like me, find it easiest just to use web mail all the time, whether at home or afloat.

In use on board

Once you have everything set up, use on board is just like at home,

you can e-mail and browse the web normally. Best though to get everything working well and tested at home before going aboard.

Simply connect the USB dongle when the laptop is powered up. The software will load and you can normally see what sort of connection (2G or 3G) is available before you 'connect' and start paying! The T-Mobile software also allows you to see what signal strength is available. This is where the long USB extension cable can be handy to position the dongle for maximum signal strength.

When happy, connect to the service and browse the web or send/receive e-mails as normal. If you do not have enough credit you will be directed to a web page where you can pay using your registered credit card.

If anyone wants more detailed help with this please e-mail or give me a call.

webmaster@tollesburycc.co.uk or
01376 514243

Colin Shead
Webmaster

T o d d l e P

Safari Supper Continued from page 7

Come 19:15 the next change was due. Rhys from *Nimrodel* was busy with the water taxi. Time started to slip but no-one seemed to notice and the main course was underway. Careful planning by the organisers meant that the main course slipped seamlessly into the pudding course followed by the cheese supplied by Robin and Jean and given that certain *je ne sais quoi* with a glass of red wine skillfully disgorged over the lot by a stray elbow assisting its owner with a story of sailing prowess – Yum! The conversation flowed freely until the time came for the return journey back to own boats,

skillfully supervised by Dave Cooke who made sure everyone was safely returned.

Change of plans

Sunday was not ideal for the planned breakfast BBQ. *Quicksilver* and *Breezer* gamely held on but it was not to be. Nevertheless, a serenely quiet Sunday in Hamford Water watching the seals basking on the mud and a meal of the previous night's left-overs on *Quicksilver* made for a very relaxing day and with the wind blowing favourably on the return journey on Monday, the weekend was rounded

off very nicely.

My thanks go to everyone who participated, and everyone did participate. These events are made what they are by the people who come. We all share a love of sailing and this event in particular gives the whole group a chance to converse, have fun and develop friendships whilst enjoying fantastic home cooking. Great weekend!

Geoff Cooch

B r e e z e r

Easter Cruise Diary

By Rolo Perrin aged 7 months

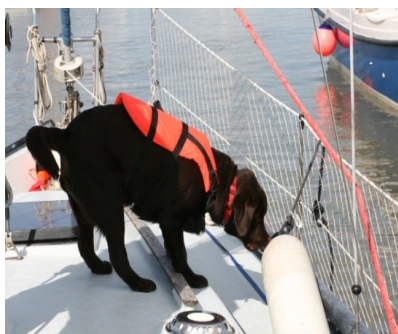
Chocolate-coloured and aptly named, Rolo is the Perrins' Labrador. Here he reports on his first foray out on the water and records his canine observations. I'm afraid sub-headings are mine. A trifle cheesy I'm sure you will agree. I'm sorry – just I couldn't resist! (Editor)

My Dad has a boat called *Grey Goose*. It looks like home on the inside but smaller and without cats. My Mum, Dad, Liz and Alex took me on my first cruise this Easter. In fact it was my first time sailing ever. We came down on a cold Thursday night and I looked after Mum and the girls whilst Dad went up to the clubhouse to see his friends and help them drink some of this funny stuff called beer. Uncle Pete (who has a floating wine cellar boat called *Codan*) was apparently very good at drinking this stuff and Dad told Mum all about what fun it was but she did not seem to want to hear his very funny stories of jokes shared with his sailing buddies.

It's a Dog's Life

The next day we were not due to leave Tollesbury until noon, so I spent the morning walking the kids, taking them to Fred's Stores (their favourite shop) and doing

some top level swimming and mud skidding. Dad didn't seem pleased to see me as I walked up my special gang plank and dripped mud all over his boat. I gave him one of my really sorrowful looks and he soon forgave me. I put on my life jacket and we were ready to go.



Me checking that the fenders are in order

As the skies darkened they soon resembled the colour of the mud on my paws. The wind blew up

and Dad eased *Grey Goose* out of her berth. With all hands on deck and me looking fabulous in my new life jacket and ears flapping in the wind, we made our exit nervously. It was Dad's first sail since Christmas and Mum didn't seem to have remembered anything from last summer apparently. The joy of having left safely soon evaporated as we found ourselves heading straight for Uncle Pete in *Codan*, who had just reversed out of his berth. Dad muttered some odd words and Mum did a lot of leaping and pointing but we came to a halt and nice Mr *Tongue Twister* Andy gave Dad instructions on how to turn the boat around. Dad was calm again and he got us turned around and out of the Marina. The nice lady Debbie on *Aloha* cheered us on and I made a note to give her one of my special hugs next time I saw her, especially when I found out that it was her birthday that day. Soon we were bouncing through

the water and I was tempted to jump off but Mum pulled me back to the helm where I was made to fall asleep. Dad, however, was all wet and looked a little cold. It was a bit 'rocky and roly' but I had fun sliding around. I really enjoyed watching Mum trying to hang on to everything down below as it flew about. Mr *Dualin* Andy was first into Brightlingsea and we all followed, bedraggled by the heavy wind and rain. By the evening the cold weather had passed and the sun came out which made me very happy. I walked up and down the pontoon meeting lots of nice people who smelled of fish. I relaxed whilst the girls painted and glittered on the boat. (They were supposed to be making Easter cards but more of the glue went over the boat from what I could see). Mum and Dad went to what is called a "soirée" on a really posh boat called *Moonshine* owned by Mr Paul. Mum looked a little pink when she got back but Dad said that she had been "on the Bolly" that she was forced to drink against her will. They obviously



Uncle Pete and Cabin Boy Glen and balls (3).

loved Mr *Moonshine* Paul's new boat as they kept talking about it all evening at the Indian restaurant according to the girls. I am not allowed in Indian restaurants after the onion bhaji incident...

The Dog's B*****ks

Saturday dawned bright and sunny. It was a really special moment for me as Uncle Pete helped me to celebrate the recent loss of my own little balls by putting three of them up his mast. Everyone seemed to be laughing at Uncle Pete and his litter mate Glen as apparently they got stuck but I knew that it was all for my benefit and I was very touched. Everyone else said "What a balls-up" which I felt was a bit cruel.



Aloha sneaking around the cold front.

A l o Teaches Old Dogs Some New Tricks

The fleet set sail at 11.30am in glorious sunshine. Sails were soon unfurled and I ate some pegs from Mum's washing bag. Then the rain came from the big black clouds. I could see sunshine beyond the clouds so I told Dad not to worry. Dad was, however, amazed at the skill of *Aloha* Ray as he tacked



Scallywag bringing up the rear for the first Lock in.

away from the edge of the front to miss the rain and then sailed back on his tracks in glorious sunshine. Now that's impressive! I think that *Aloha* Debbie didn't want to get her hair wet which is as good a reason for excellent seamanship as anything else.

Dog Days

The sail up to Heybridge in the sunshine was fabulous and I did some more top level sleeping seeing as Dad didn't need my help. I was however woken up by Alex for lock entry duties as we came through in the second wave of boats. I was distracted at a crucial moment by a duck looking succulent on the water. Dad also started making friends with sailors from the Tollesbury Mud Club who shared the lock with us.

We all got in safely and the lovely lock keeper Martin kept smiling and made us feel welcome which was nice, even though his dog was not so welcoming despite my efforts to sniff his bottom nicely.

Continued overleaf

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In fact, the lockside was full of dogs that seemed to want to eat me for the most part but I knew I was safe. I was kept busy for hours. Nice Mr José from *Scallywag* and his wife Inma and three children Carla, Alicia and Damian kept me amused and I did my best to welcome them to the club.

I was left for a few hours on Saturday evening whilst everyone went over to The Ship to have a meal which seemed to be much enjoyed. I was not brought back any leftovers as the greedy TCC members ate everything up. Dad and Mum did take me for a walk at midnight and I listened to them talk drivell for an hour.

Easter morning and everyone on board smelled of chocolate. I just looked like a fat chocolate drop with ears. I helped Dad organise the Easter Egg Hunt early in the morning and all the young people like "Grandad" Robin and "Grandma" Jean of *Polo IV* and Mr *Dualin* Andy and Mrs Jo showed the kids how it was done. I did try and eat some of the eggs before Dad realised that it was rabbit poo - yum! It smelled very nice anyway.

We had a long relax until the lock gates were due to open at 3.45pm.



Easter Egg Hunters (and handsome dog)

The great and the good of Heybridge came to watch us and a family kept asking Alex and I questions about the sheets. (They called them ropes as they are ignorant unlike me) and dogs. I could only assume that they were a bit like motor racing crowds, they were all waiting for a crash or a boat to burst into flames.



Majestic *Moonshine* in the sunshine

We all got away beautifully and we all felt really proud as the boats eased up the Blackwater looking majestic in the evening sunshine.

Dog's Dinner

We could have sailed on to Ipswich had the grown-ups not all been invited to yet another party on *Moonshine*, where apparently there was some champagne that Mum didn't find at the last party. Mr Paul yet again showed unswerving generosity to all as he opened the East Wing of his boat once again. Mr Barney from *Amy Louise* was celebrating his birthday and he joined Grandad and Grandma *Polo* to celebrate their

46th Anniversary. Mum and Dad were last seen staggering to and from the Green Man to meet up with friends. Uncle Pete and Glen had a private three course meal on their boat which sounded delicious. I was tempted to join their crew but I don't have any balls left to lend them next time they get stuck in the mud.

Everyone seemed to be very slow getting up on Easter Monday and they all asked me to bark quietly as their heads were sore. I forced everyone to take me to the beach by the power station and I thought that Dad might appreciate me coming back with mud, sand and more rabbit poo. He was, however, deeply involved installing his radio which kept him quiet and he didn't notice my dirt. Later that afternoon we motored back to Tollesbury to find that it was a very low tide and the bigger boats only just made it over the sill. Mum had eaten so much chocolate *Grey Goose* only just made it over this time!

My first cruise was a great success and I felt that everyone behaved and sailed very well. It was great to make new friends and to sniff dogs from the other side of the river.

Rolo

Guard Dog, *Grey Goose*
(Photos etc Charlotte Perrin)



Gosh, this sailing life is hard!