

UP THE CREEK



The Newsletter of Tollesbury Cruising Club. March 2017

Commodores Musings:-

Here we are at the start of a new boating season. The last few days the weather has been glorious and I find myself itching to get a coat of antifoul on the bottom of Dionysus, and get back in the water.

Finally the program for 2017, has been confirmed, it sometimes takes ages for other clubs to agree mutual dates, and then it all changes again. This can be very frustrating. However copies of the program are available from our website and will be mailed out.

Hopefully we have arranged some of the old favourite outings alongside a few new alternatives. Those of you who enjoy our cross channel outing will notice we have broken with tradition and moved the event from late May to the August Bank Holiday. This is because the weather early in the year has been “unstable” to say the least, and that the tides for the Spring Bank Holiday are rather unsociable.

Personally I am looking forward to the Fitting Out Supper on the 22th of April where we have Dave Selby of Practical Boat Owner magazine coming to talk about “Marlins Mission”, and his objective of showing how much fun you can have in a small boat on a tight budget. Anyone who has read his column will testify he is a very funny guy, and for a laugh the dress code is Lumber-Jack shirt or smart casual!

I want to welcome all new and existing members to come and join us. Boating in company can be great fun, a good source of information exchange, and encouragement for those less experienced. So please come and join in, you'll find Yelena and me on board Dionysus, Pontoon C, along with our friendly ginger Pharaoh hound.

Racing Review - From Our Racing Rear Commodore – Jose Zalabardo, Scallywag –Pontoon B

Spring is in the air and the next sailing season is nearly upon us. In addition to our cruising programme we are running the usual selection of light-touch racing events. These are taken with varying degrees of seriousness by those involved, with your rear commodore (racing) falling towards the lower end of the seriousness spectrum. Races are always organised in conjunction with a cruising event. The only obvious difference between the race and the cruise is that the racers will round a couple of extra buoys and will keep their engines off. Early highlights include the Wallet Long Race, taking us to the Orwell on 17 June, the Goldie Challenge, to the Crouch on 1 July, and the Steve Rix Passage Race, again to the Orwell, on 22 July. Everyone is encouraged to have a go. The handicap system allows the smaller or slower boats to compete on equal terms. Contact me or any other committee member for further information.

Cruising notes – From Our Cruising Rear Commodore – David Prentis – Wavedancer Pontoon F

The evenings are drawing out, there is a whiff of antifoul in the air and our thoughts turn to the season ahead. The TCC programme starts on 25 March with the traditional ‘shakedown’ – a short hop over to Bradwell Marina followed by a meal at the Green Man.

The Easter Cruise is heading up the Blackwater to Heybridge – a historic canal basin with two pubs. What's not to like? We understand that new lock gates are being installed, works that are due to be completed by the

start of April. Subject to that, our plan is to pick up moorings at West Mersea on Good Friday then sail up to Heybridge on the Saturday where we will lock in for the night. On the Sunday we will drop back down the river to Bradwell, then home on Monday. No doubt there will be some club meals along the way – I'm still working on that.

The Walton and Frinton Yacht Club has a beautiful location on the edge of the Walton Backwaters. Those of us who shared an enjoyable evening in their excellent club house last year will be looking forward to a return visit on the May Bank Holiday weekend. The idea is that we make our way up the Wallet on the Saturday, stopping overnight at Suffolk Yacht Harbour. It would then be a relatively short trip to Titchmarsh Marina on Sunday afternoon, with a club meal at WFYC in the evening.

There is much more to come, including BBQs, concrete lighters, cricket matches and beach parties. We also have some longer cruises planned, to Southwold in June and Gravelines in August. Please have a look at the full events list and keep an eye on what is coming up on the forum. Talk to me – or any of the Committee – if you want to know more about any of the events. Looking forward to seeing you on the water.

Amelia's first Round Osea Race – Mandy Jarvis – Amelia - Pontoon B

We sailed past the start buoy late, and had missed the official race start by a few minutes. Not disheartened, we followed the rest of the racing fleet towards Osea. A good blow filled the genoa and set us at a good, steady pace, but then a gust and a strengthening wind sent us on a collision course with the Marconi moorings. We hastily powered up and motored to safety, and then resumed sailing once clear. Still not disheartened, we rounded the Island and had a fantastic sail to the finish line at a 30 degree heel most of the way. But a third misdemeanour awaited us we sailed over a small mooring bouy hiding in the chop and snagged its line. The cavalry arrived in the form of Andy Hobden, on the Marshall's dinghy, smiling wryly at our predicament. We readily confessed our disqualifying actions, only to be told - in no uncertain terms - that we were already disqualified on 2 counts of passing the wrong side of both the start *and* finish bouys! A placing of last was the final insult. But not all was lost on this voyage of learning and enlightenment the "hide-and-seek" mooring buoy suddenly bobbed up from under our hull setting us free.

Cruise to St Katherines Dock – Tony Westbrook – Wavedancer – Pontoon F

One August evening last year found four intrepid TCC yachts tied up to an old concrete barge off

Queenborough near the mouth of the Medway. Well, actually only three, as Tony and Mandy had had to take their dogs for a walk ashore, so they came out courtesy of the harbour masters launch.

At the little party we held on the barge in the last rays of the evening sun we all agreed on a pre-dawn start the next morning. This went wrong straight away, when the afore-mentioned dogs needed their morning run. First dilemma – do we wait or continue? In the end we decided to carry on, but not too fast, to allow the dog-owners in our midst to catch up, but in the event the 'cruise in company' became more like four separate adventures all happening in sight of each other.

After navigating around the sandbank to turn into the Thames proper, each skipper taking his own line, we soon passed the large new London Gateway container port. The river is wide and expansive here, the lowlands

of Essex to the north and the low hills of Kent opposite. It gradually gets more industrial, and meanders about, before getting to a long straight stretch as you go under the Dartford Crossing, with the tiny cars and lorries far above us.

There was more river traffic near the Tilbury docks, including freighters turning around and queuing to go through the huge locks. Rather worryingly, the Port of London VHF radio, who we had all had to report to, described us to the captain of another ship as 'four targets coming up river'. We ignored this and motored on past the venerated passenger ship dock at Tilbury with a huge liner tied up there. I do not recall exactly what the weather was like, only that there was not enough wind to sail with, so we motored all day.

The river was now noticeably narrower with more and more buildings close up to the banks. The tall buildings of Canary Wharf came into sight and suddenly there were huge blocks of luxury flats on either side and the water became more and more choppy as the tourist boats buzzed up and down and passed by us.

Then came Greenwich. It is renowned to be one of the greatest sights in Europe from the river – and it is. Beautiful solid stone classical buildings, which express the confidence of Imperial Britain, all designed to be seen from the water. We slowed down to take it all in, and snap away.

The river curves round more and by now both banks are fully developed with people walking or cycling along the riverside paths. Canary Wharf rears up again behind the riverside flats - soaring, pointed and imperious, with its smaller squat sisters all around it, named after the banks that caused the recession.

The tide is now sweeping our four small boats relentlessly up river, past old riverside pubs like the Prospect of Whitby and the Mayflower, past blocks of flats shaped like pyramids and step-ladders, ocean liners and sails, 1930's radio sets and modern day computers. As we had come through the curvaceous bulwarks of the Thames Barrier an hour or two earlier, we had passed a large three-masted barque with her sails ready to unfurl, no doubt on some form of cultural exchange trip to London. But now the river traffic was mainly tourist pleasure cruisers, fast passenger catamarans and police launches.

But in three days time, when we were returning back home going down river, we were to see a huge ocean liner, much like the one we had seen tied up at Tilbury, coming out through Tower Bridge, filling the river and dwarfing all but the tallest buildings.

But for now we continued right up to Tower Bridge, looking out for the entrance to St Katherine's Dock, hidden on the right. We were an hour early for appointed lock in time, but circling around in the busy, choppy waters in front of Tower Bridge in mid-afternoon was not an attractive proposition. Luckily the marina heard our VHF transmissions and opened the lock gates early. With a bit of poking and prodding and the judicious use of fenders, we all squeezed into the lock, and entered a different world. Calm and serene, quiet and organized, clean and well-manicured. That was what St Katherine's Dock felt like after the dangers out on the river. Once it was London's first purpose built ships dock; now it is the home to hotels, offices, pubs and bars, like the world famous Dickens Inn (so named as Charles D himself was said to have drunk there before it moved across the dock in the 1970's).

We all moored up close to each other and spent two delightful days being tourists in our own capital city, sleeping in the middle of the biggest financial district in Europe, visiting the famous sights such as the Tower, the Tate and St Pauls and eating and drinking in the waterside bars and cafes.

We realised what a wonderful city London is and why such a different way of getting there was so fulfilling. It will probably not feel the same to do it again, but even if it is only half as good, I would do it all over again next time.

(Amelia, Polo IV, Wave Dancer and Challenge II all cruised in company to St Katherines Dock as part of the TCC Summer Cruise in August 2016.)

NB - Wave Dancer is a 25 year old Moody 346 - and our usually reliable Thorneycroft engine developed a fault the very next day just after our trip back down the Thames, on our way back to Tollesbury from Queenborough – so many thanks go to Polo IV for providing a welcome tow back into Woodrolfe Marina... and thank goodness it did not fail us in the London river.

Up the Creek but with paddles - Mid September 2016 – Tony Jarvis – Amelia – Pontoon B

My son and I arrived at Orford Haven 2 hours before HW, armed with the latest chartlet - the shingle bar looked scary with the tide pouring into the Ore. We followed the buoyed channel watching the depth sounder all the way until deep water returned. We motored up the Ore aided by 4 knots of current, past Orford into the Alde and finally reached Aldeburgh dead on HW. We picked up a mooring, jumped into the dinghy and motored to the Yacht Club, then walked into town.

On return we motored the dinghy into 5 knots of Ebb, making slow progress until our (un)trustee outboard motor packed up and would not restart. Out with the paddles! We took it in turns to row like mad from moored boat to moored boat (stopping at each to catch breath). We got back to Amelia exhausted - but very relieved.

Next hurdle, how do we exit the Ore? I decided to leave at first light (6am). A fast trip down the Alde/Ore, then suddenly there was the entrance/exit; gravel bars everywhere and we were approaching this at 6 knots (2 knots motor to maintain steerage and 4 knots of current). I chose a route close to our entry track and what looked like the deepest water. The lowest reading was 3 ft 6 inches but we didn't touch, suddenly we were in 12 feet of water and safe – phew! that was close and very scary!

The avocets at dawn on Havengate Island, a sight to behold!