



Forestay

I apologise if this issue has the appearance of being cobbled together at the last minute because, in a sense, it has. Blame the computer, which has been in terminal decline for some time; I bit the bullet and bought a new one, but the task of transferring and re-loading stuff is so daunting that I decided to give the vintage model one more go at Eastcoaster. Those readers who notice no difference from previous issues, forget what I said.

Now to the sailing. I write this with the season more than half gone, with only the Classics Week and Maldon Regatta to look forward to; in reviewing the events held early in the season, you will see strong winds are a frequent theme, culminating in a character-building East Coast Race where it blew F7. After that, it calmed down a bit and there was good weather for the Swallows and Amazons open boats event and for the RHS rally; long may it continue.



Cachalette at Wrabness

In this Issue

Forestay
May Day Rally
Crouch Rally
Ostend at Anchor
Swallows and Amazons
The East Coast Race
RHS Rally
Forthcoming Events
Backstay



East Coast Race – The gathering storm

Reports of Events

May Day Rally (In hall if wet)

I suppose we gaffers can count ourselves lucky to have enjoyed two years of good weather for the popular barbecue at Battlesbridge, on the first May bank holiday. This year Saturday's weather was good, dry and sunny with a light easterly, but the forecast for Sunday was dire: rain, cold and strong winds. This didn't discourage the fleet, and at least sixteen boats set out for Fambridge. It says something for the persistence and optimism of the gaffers that only two didn't make it; your editor failed to allow enough time to get into the Crouch before the ebb set in and went up the Colne instead to sulk, while Nigel Basset in his lovely bermudan Quiet Days had engine trouble off the Crouch entrance. There was no wind and Nigel was unwilling to call on the emergency services, so he and Terry pumped up the inflatable, attached a 2hp outboard and made it back to West Mersea – four and a half hours later.

Those who made it included Kajun from the Medway, Deirdre from Maldon, and Ian Kemp's newly acquired Pintail from Benfleet, via the Havengore. The 'Janty Men' Toby and Hugo, having sold Janty, have up-sized to a Heard 28, and even Graham 'Menuhin' Jenkins got there from the Blackwater, and all enjoyed the evening meal in the marina Bistro.

Sunday's dismal forecast proved correct and only one boat made it up to Battlesbridge – and that was Mike McCarthy's motor cruiser Emma Hamilton, loaded down with gaffers who preferred to leave their boats at Fambridge.

Others came by car, so over 30 folk eventually arrived at Battlesbridge Hall, where host Roy Hart had wisely substituted a hot meal indoors for the planned barbie. Guests were welcomed with a roaring log fire and then sat down to lasagne and baked potatoes, followed by apple pie and ice cream, all in a very convivial atmosphere, further lightened by a trio of fiddlers bringing out the shanty singer in everyone. (Graham's new instrument performed well in spite of, or maybe because of, its exposure to the continuous rain the previous night).

Many thanks to organisers Roy Hart and Trevor Rawlinson for another great weekend; Trevor spoke for us all when he said, "No matter what the weather, gaffers always have a good time".

Bernard Patrick



Host Roy Hart



Gaffers assemble at Fambridge

Once the prize-giving is over and the thank-you speeches made, entrants still have to get home, and it can be a long way to anywhere from Fambridge in a small boat. What follows is an extract from Robinetta's log and shows the commitment of your average EC gaffer.

The long drag back

The 7:10 forecast came on the VHF and the F7 was expected only in the south of the area, and locally the wind had abated to F5-6 so we decided to give it a go. We cast off at 07:35, followed Deirdre down river and, sailing well with a fully reefed main and jib, we headed out of the Crouch as close to the wind as Robinetta could manage. Mike McCarthy in Emma Hamilton motored past us just after we tacked between the Crouch and Outer Crouch buoys – he had to get all the way up to Maldon. The seas were not too bad until we were past Ridge, but after that they got up a bit and knocked Robinetta back. She was making a lot of leeway too, so we put the engine on to compensate and it stayed on the rest of the day

We got to the Whitaker at 10:25, and saw Steve Meakin in Cormorant catching us up. She doesn't have an engine and we tacked together towards the Swin Spitway buoy. That was when everything got very difficult; it should have been possible just to sail into the Spitway on that course, but the seas made it absolutely impossible to get past the buoy. The flood was running now, pushing us west onto the Buxey, and we tacked back and forth for about 45 minutes, making very little headway even with motor. Cormorant could not make the buoy either; after three or four approaches she gave up and turned to run back to the Crouch, but we decided to persevere and motor through. The jib would not furl head to wind, the Wykeham Martin gear was jammed, so Julian had to go on the foredeck to get the jib down, then motored head to wind to get the main down.

We had managed to get within forty yards of the buoy at one point, but it took nearly an hour to motor back at less than a knot under full engine. The seas were huge (for us in our 22 footer anyway) and confused with spray breaking over the coach-roof, but we finally spotted the Wallet Spitway buoy and had something to steer for, on a course where we could set the staysail. Suddenly we went from 1 knot to 4, and with the staysail steadying us steering became less of a battle. The seas around the Wallet buoy were as confused as those around the Swin, and it took a long time to work clear of the Spitway.

As soon as we could, we turned northwest and

could sail at last; it's amazing how much easier everything became once Robinetta was doing the job she was designed for. We throttled the engine back to save fuel and still made 3-5 knots depending on how hard the wind was gusting, The seas moderated after we passed Knoll and pretty soon we were threading our way to our mooring in West Mersea, which we picked up just after 18.00 – 10½ hours from Fambridge! We had a very welcome cup of tea, repacked our bags, and left Robinetta alone on her mooring after the hardest day's sailing we have ever experienced.

The anemometer on Cobmarsh Island, West Mersea, recorded gusts up to force 7; it's good to know we can handle that sort of wind, but if we're going to make a practice of it we want storm sails!

Julian and Alison Cable

Crouch Rally 29th-31st May, 2010 (The Crouch Mafia strikes back)

The weekend began quietly enough; Saturday's southerly wind and the early afternoon tide ensured that boats from Brightlingsea and Levington arrived around lunchtime, joining those who had made the passage to the Crouch the previous day. Deirdre made it from Maldon just before the wind increased, but local boat William, arriving later, experienced the full force of the much stronger wind.

By late afternoon there were twelve gaffers and four classic Bermudans on the pontoon or out on moorings, an excellent gathering to celebrate 25 years of this event. The very first Crouch Rally in 1985 began with a barbecue in Cliff Reach on the Saturday night, when Alice and Florrie, then Fambridge based, towed down a skiff full of timber for the bonfire. The following day's race saw light winds and a drift down river, but later a squall made sailing in the upper reaches interesting and created havoc amongst the Cadet open meeting off Creeksea. The gaffer fleet finished at North Fambridge and feasted in the Ferryboat Inn. This event was the brainchild of Brenda Jago, ably supported by George, but unfortunately neither were able to attend this year owing to George's illness. However, their significant role was remembered and a card signed by all was later delivered to Smugglers Cottage.

Fast forward 25 years to Saturday night at the NFYC, where the Larkin's ale proved a hit as usual and the barrel began to lighten as the afternoon passed into evening. Twenty-nine crew sat down

to a tasty fish and chip supper and eventually the musicians struck up, but the numerous early starts began to take their toll. On Sunday morning – race day – the forecast was W to NW 5-7, decreasing 4 at times. The grey beginning was not encouraging and the thirty who sat down for breakfast did not seem too enthusiastic about racing! All eyes were on the anemometer, which occasionally hit Force 7, and boat names began to be crossed off the sign-on sheet until there were only eight left.

Whisper, the new lightweight gaffer, was the first to leave the pontoon but soon returned for repairs. Ian Kemp and Rob Williamson were on station below the moorings with the committee boat. Eventually eight reefed boats were on the line; it could have been ten, had not the skippers of Random and Charm, despite making preparations, decided a shore day was more attractive. Those not afloat gathered on the sea wall to watch the start. Mary Ritchie's skipper had difficulty with his stopwatch and was aware that he was 20 seconds or so out on timing; however, to ensure a good start he positioned the boat close to the committee boat. A gybe was necessary to avoid being over the line and then back onto to port as the rest of the fleet ran down to the start against the incoming tide. Soon Janner, the Heard 28, was crossing the line and despite being mid-river overtook Mary Ritchie. The fleet kept fairly well together to Fairway 15, where Janner rounded first, followed by Mary Ritchie. Unfortunately, the wind had already gone north west and the beat up Cliff Reach was tough. Janner slowed to sort out the jib and Mary Ritchie sailed past, only to be overtaken again above Canewdon. William and Greensleeves were fighting it out and making good speed to windward; however, Roy Hart, with Elder Gaffer Mike Peyton as crew, decided to lead William astray on the second



Janner, second

down-wind leg and sailed past the Canewdon buoy and was on his way to Cliff!

Janner crossed the finish line first, but Mary Ritchie was less than three minutes behind and saved her time on handicap to win the event. William's earlier advantage over Greensleeves disappeared on the beat home, giving third place to Roy and Mike, while Deirdre, despite having sailed so well, decided that the final 50 metres through the moorings to the finish was a tack too far and motored across the line. Robinetta had duelled with Jacinta,



The start, Robinetta nearest

but both decided that the beat back to Canewdon from Short Pole Reach was not attractive and retired, whilst Whisper suffered a further breakage. So on corrected time the first three boats were all from the Crouch including two from the host club. The Crouch Mafia rule, OK!

Shortly after all the boats returned, force 8 gusts were recorded in the clubhouse. The increase in wind and water pouring off the saltings created a difficult sea around the head of the pontoon and the two Vertues with Rob and Mike aboard departed, but within an hour or so all was much calmer in the mooring area.

In the evening the wind dropped, the sun was out and the barbecue was underway. There was food a-plenty and prize-giving followed, with a reminder that this was the 25th anniversary. Soon the musicians were in full swing and we were entertained with singing, foot tapping tunes and recitations. Mike King led the latter, ably supported by Lorna Hill and Roy Hart. Mike seemed to have difficulties reading one piece and some brave soul suggested it was not surprising, as he had begun reading it well before the sun had set!

Monday was quieter and several boats left early, but there were still more than twenty crew for breakfast. By lunchtime, apart from the local Fambridge gaffers there was no sign of the visitors and the pontoon began to fill with other craft.

A big thank you to Trevor Rawlinson, supported by Elaine, for organising a very enjoyable event. Also to Pauline Garman, Commodore of NFYC, for arranging the catering, the team of willing gaffers who helped to prepare food and wash up, and Ian and Pam Kemp for providing the committee boat.

Don Garman

Results of Crouch Race

Inde Coope and Allsop Trophy;
Mary Ritchie - Don and Pauline Garman

Skua Trophy;
Janner - Hugo Lane and Toby Bennett

Teal Trophy;
Greensleeves - Roy Hart and Mike Peyton



Mary Ritchie, winner

Here is another extract from Robinetta's log, viewing the race from a different perspective.

A winner at last

We woke up to a forecast of F4-6, occasionally 7, and several boats decided not to start in the conditions, so in the end only seven of us idiots were on the start line. The course was a run down from Fambridge to just before the start of the Burnham moorings, then a beat back up river nearly to Fambridge, run down river again, then beat all the way back to the start line. We reefed fully in response to the forecast, which was probably a mistake on the first downwind leg, since we were soon at the back of the fleet despite getting a good start.

Then we got very discouraged after rounding the first buoy and began the beat back; Robinetta did not want to come about, and we had to use the engine to help us tack, which made retiring from the race inevitable. However, the evening barbecue back at North Fambridge made up for the disappointment of the race, with the gaffers providing their usual quality of entertainment. Only two boats had entered the passage race, and Robinetta and Whisper were declared joint winners.... a first ever "win" for us!

Julian and Alison Cable

Ostend at Anchor

Sue Lewis has a lot to answer for; her descriptions in Eastcoaster of the delights of the Oostende vor Anker classic boat rally really set the imagination going – hundreds of beautiful old classics, thousands of admiring public, unlimited cheap beer – who could resist? Certainly not Colin Stroud, owner of Plum, a well known Heard 23, and back in March this year we agreed to give it a go. It would be Colin's first North Sea crossing under sail, and many years since I had been over in our Peter Duck Goosander, so an adventure for both of us.

Charts were purchased, Brian Navin's North Sea Pilot consulted, the chart plotter given its instructions, an AIS receiver installed and the local stores cleaned out of enough pinhead oatmeal to keep us in porridge for several weeks.

If at first you don't succeed...

The event takes place over the UK Bank Holiday weekend, and this year's began on Thursday 27th May, so preparations were made to leave Bradwell on the top of the tide on Tuesday 25th. The forecast was not encouraging, NE 3-4, occasionally 5, but we thought, well, if we only get to Harwich, it'll be a start. Little did we know – we were barely past Bradwell power station and poor Plum was trying to stand on her transom in the steep seas. We tried motoring over to the Mersea shore and then sailing – single reef and staysail – towards the Gunfleet wind farm, and it was fine initially, but became terribly rough off the N Eagle with the ebb now running strongly against the more than 'occasional' F5.

There were one or two other madmen out as well, and we saw Steve in his engineless Cormorant heading down the Colne and out towards the

Spitway; we heard later he turned back, preferring the comfort of Wivenhoe to the excitement of Ostend.

Colin then had the idea that, if we waited for the weather-going tide, the seas would be less and we could motor to Harwich; this was really an excuse to scurry back to Pyefleet and have lunch, because when we set out again the sea was just as bad and, even motoring, Plum was down to 1.5 kts at times. We finally realised how lost the cause had become when the GPS announced that our Harwich ETA was 01.20 the next day.

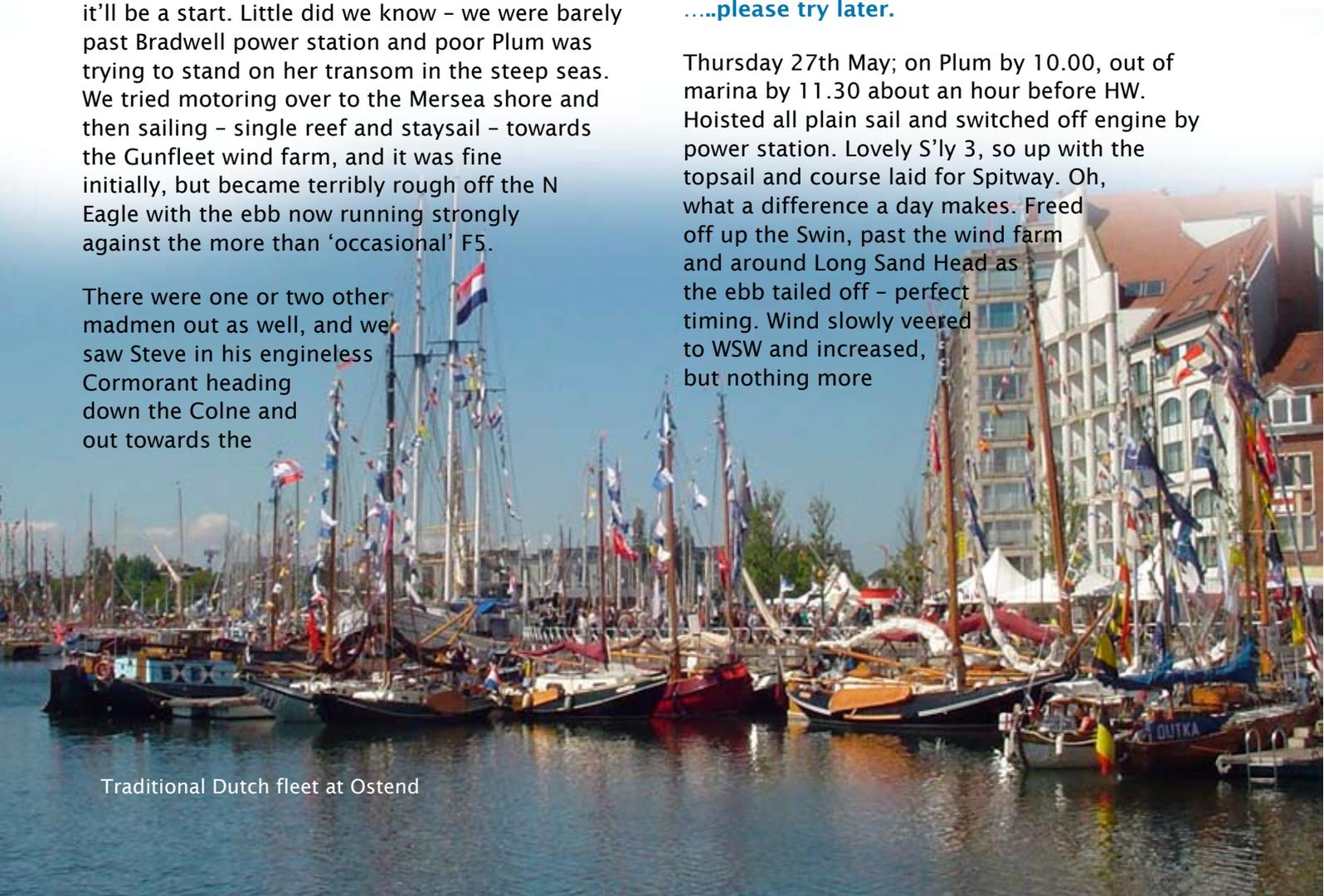
So, reluctantly but with relief, we turned Plum back towards Bradwell, unrolled half the staysail and enjoyed the 6kt roller-coaster ride.

Eternally optimistic and denying defeat, we didn't go home, but had one of Colin's memorable meals and, not wishing to embarrass our partners at this late hour, spent the night on board.

I was up at 07.10 to listen to Wednesday's forecast on VHF – 'SE 4-5, occ.6, outlook variable 3 or less'. It didn't take much discussion to agree on a 24hr postponement and before you could say 'hot showers' we were on our way home.

.....please try later.

Thursday 27th May; on Plum by 10.00, out of marina by 11.30 about an hour before HW. Hoisted all plain sail and switched off engine by power station. Lovely S'yly 3, so up with the topsail and course laid for Spitway. Oh, what a difference a day makes. Freed off up the Swin, past the wind farm and around Long Sand Head as the ebb tailed off – perfect timing. Wind slowly veered to WSW and increased, but nothing more



Traditional Dutch fleet at Ostend

than F4, so the shipping lanes could be crossed on a 90 deg.heading. The topsail came down at dusk and still the miles reeled off, supper was cooked and the washing-up done under way; the full moon came up, giving a hard horizon all night; the AIS confidently predicting the paths of tankers and container ships ploughing up and down their designated lanes at anything up to 22kts. Tiredness set in about 03.00, when I altered course to avoid a fishing fleet, only to find it was the W Hinder anchorage ablaze with lights. A grey, cloudy dawn dragged itself up at about 04.00, the wind still W'ly and gusting F5 – but we're nearly there. Very lumpy in the shallows off the entrance to Ostend harbour, but the sails were furled and the engine on for the first time since leaving Bradwell. A quick call to port control at about 05.00, "Yes, come in before the sailing boat." The 'sailing boat' was a square rigger, coming in under full sail!

Colin had done his homework and knew how to find the slit in the harbour wall which is the entrance to Magellan dock and then to the lock which leads to the Mercator dock, our destination. We were soon through, under the two lifting bridges and into Mercator, to face a panorama of traditional boats from all over western Europe. We found space at the far end, moored stern-to and collapsed into our bunks; 92nm in under 18 hrs – very satisfying.

Three days of Happy Hours

What seemed like thirty seconds later – it was actually three hours – we were woken by a 'musical' duo, marching up and down the pontoon, announcing the arrival of half the Belgian population who shuffled by, gazing in admiration at the assembled craft. As we were moored stern-to, it was like living in a goldfish bowl, so we sauntered off to a party on Avola where Brian and Lorna Hammett and Phil and Wendy Wetherill were dispensing drinks and eats to local crews and we listened smugly as the other English crews described the discomfort of Wednesday's crossing, a day earlier than us. Before we had exhausted Avola's supplies it was time for 'happy hour' at the crews' marquee – a live band, and lots of chat fuelled by a 'buy a beer and get one free' policy at the bar.

There were more freebies the next morning, when all the crews assembled behind the town band and marched (shambled) to the town hall for speeches and unlimited, very potent, free beer. Then it was time to tour the fleet, especially admiring the scores of gorgeous traditional Dutch yachts and

the immaculately maintained Belgian brigantine Mercator.

Sunday was the final day of the event, and on cue the weather deteriorated; it was cold, showery and, bad news, the wind was NW'ly 5 or 6, right onshore, and quiet satisfaction was gained from watching a powerful, well-crewed British yacht pound its way out of the entrance through the breakers – and return within half an hour. The British Peter Duck Goldeneye left for home and we heard he made it OK, but it can't have been comfortable.

Monday was spent worrying about the weather; the promise of 'light and variable' winds receded with each forecast and we were not encouraged when the Folkboat in the next berth returned after two hours, having failed to get down the coast to Gravelines. A walk to the Royal North Sea YC to get a forecast proved fruitless; a member of the staff told us to 'read the newspaper'!

The Grib charts that Colin could raise on his laptop foretold a window in the weather, so plans were made to leave the next morning. However, now that the rally was over the lock was not manned between 19.00 and 08.00 so, together with Transcur and Witch, we elected to move out of the Mercator dock on Monday evening; they moored up outside, but we motored upstream to the Ostend YC to find a quieter berth (and next to a friend from Maldon).

As promised, the wind had almost disappeared by dawn on Tuesday and we motored out over an oily swell. A light N'ly eventually came in for a few hours, but it was engine-on again when we got to the main shipping lane. It was here we eavesdropped on a bit of drama over the VHF. Witch called to say that they were in the N-bound lane, with no wind and a fishing net around the prop. Pete Thomas turned Transcur around, motored back and towed Witch out of the shipping lane, where Alistair was able to go over the side and, after several attempts, cut the net free. It was reassuring to hear all the offers of assistance from other boats and the way Thames and Dover coastguard closely monitored the situation.

For us it was a mixture of sail and motor all the way to Bradwell, where we arrived in the very early hours of Wednesday morning after an uneventful 20 hour trip. It could have been more dramatic – later that day Colin found a 4 foot length of rope around the prop! Some folks is just lucky.

Bernard Patrick.

Swallows and Amazons at the Walton and Frinton Yacht Club.

This was the eleventh year of this popular event and this year the weather was kind to us all. Over 38 boats had signed up for the event with several travelling a long way to participate. Many people



Mantra leads

arrived on Friday and set up their camp in a local garden, which had been very kindly made available to us. There was a lot of activity in the dinghy park as craft of all shapes and sizes were unhitched and prepared for the morning; several 'mother' craft arrived, including Mary Amelia and Transcur, with their tenders, and moored up in the Pond or quayside.

The race

On Saturday morning there was a lot of activity as the boats were launched. We had good weather

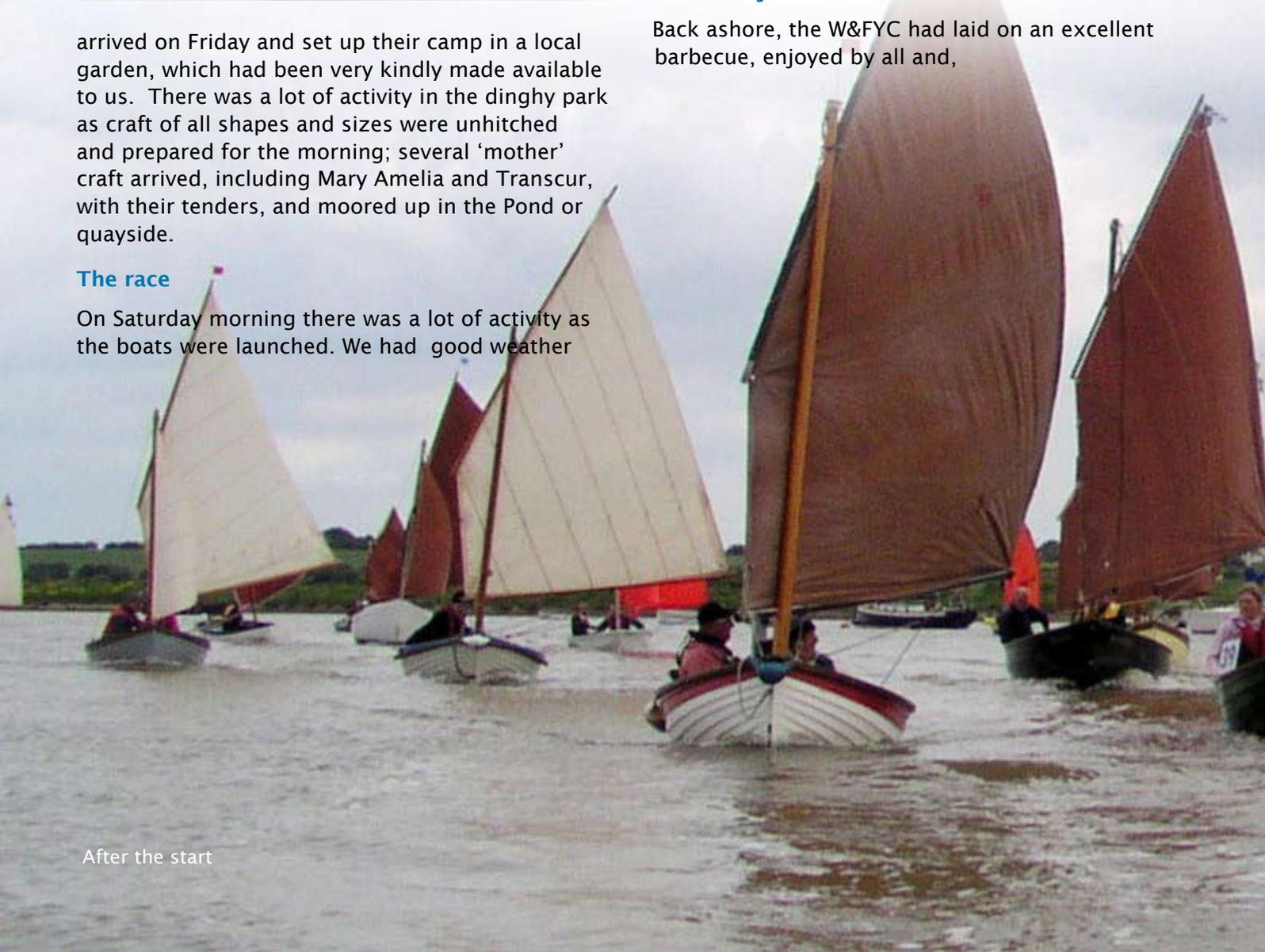
for a change, with a light wind. This year the course set was to take us round Horsey Island in a clockwise direction, over the causeway, down Hamford Water and back up the Twizzle and finish at the yacht club.. High water was approximately 12:00 and the start line was across the Twizzle - still quite crowded with 38 boats all over the place.

The racing fleet varied between a 12sq Metre Sharpie, an International canoe, clinker lug rigged dinghies, Mirrors and a Winkle Brig and a fleet of 7 smack boats and a Merlin Rocket. Quite quickly the racers forged their way to the front but the sight of the fleet crossing the Wade was quite amazing. It was not high water when the boats started to cross the Wade and several boats had minor problems navigating through the shallows, which had tufts of grass showing in places.

The wind increased as the race went on and made for an exciting sail, but the only casualty was a minor dismasting [what is a 'minor' dismasting? Sounds like being 'slightly' pregnant] of a Mirror and one capsized.

Post race junket

Back ashore, the W&FYC had laid on an excellent barbecue, enjoyed by all and,



After the start

Thanks must go to the Walton and Frinton Yacht Club who hosted the event and did everything they could to make it a success, including providing safety cover and Paul who looked after all our catering and drinking needs.

Thanks also to the campsite providers who gave up their gardens for the tents and gear, and all the organising team of Old Gaffers.

Pete Thomas



Pirate ship

once people had recovered, children of all ages set to and built the customary “paper boats” which were then raced across the Pond. Great fun was had by all. The youngest member, Henry Hodgkinson’s (4) boat was the clear winner. Fun Prizes were awarded to entrants and teams .

Sunday

On the Sunday mid-morning around 16 dinghies set off from the club to meet up with their other “halves”. Boats had been given half the name of well known pirates and the idea was for them to find the other half of the name given to another boat. Dinghies then sailed to Stone Point where a quick picnic was had before the tide turned and participants returned to the W&FYC, to load up and make their way home.

Prize winners

Traditional Gaffer Class

- 1st Medea
- 2nd Woody

Spirit Of Tradition Class

- 1st Mantra
- 2nd Montmorency

New Classic Class

- 1st Cloud Nine
- 2nd Anglia

Smack Boat Class

- 1st Willow
- 2nd Lettuce

Modern Hot Shots

- 1st Manic
- 2nd Golden Smitch



East Coast Race weekend

Late lunch

The weekend began with a passage race to West Mersea for the traditional sea food lunch (although the tide times made it more of a high tea) after which the fleet cruised to Brightlingsea and were



Sea food lunch at W Mersea

shepherded to their moorings by the helpful harbour staff.

Saturday was race day, and was held in the most challenging weather for some years. Here are two personal accounts, the first by Sue Lewis and Howard Wheelton in Victoria, their 1886 Colne police cutter. The other is another extract from relative newcomers Julian and Alison's log of Robinetta.

A rollercoaster ride

Not in the previous eight years, and maybe more, had the fleet of the big East Coast race of the year left the shelter of the rivers. In light airs, a short course is needed for reasons of timing, and in a blow the race committee have preferred to keep us out of the open sea.

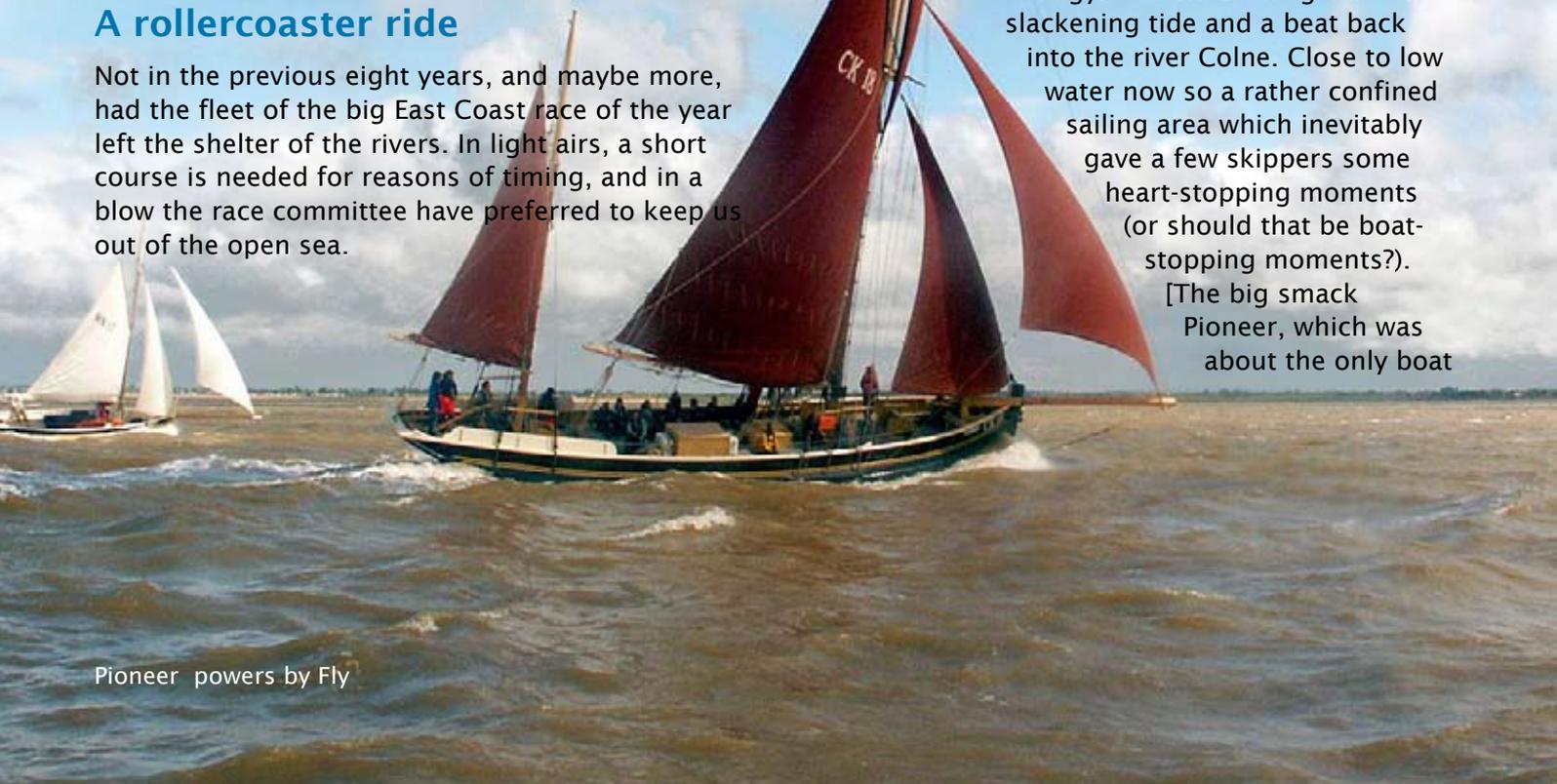
Is it the new political climate that swayed the committee this year? Perhaps a gleeful shedding of the nanny state mentality? Or was it perhaps a touch of midsummer madness? In a forecast of F5-7 from the north we were sent on an 18 mile rollercoaster ride to a gybe mark(!) off Clacton Pier. Small consolation that we didn't have to go to the Wallet Spitway mark as well.....

40 boats were registered, 33 started and 24 finished the race in challenging conditions; wind stronger than forecast (gusts of 40 knots recorded - without wishing to 'gale drop' that is well and truly a Force 8) and a lumpy sea to go with it as you'd expect.

A run out of the Colne with the tide, with evidence of uncertainty about the weather as some boats had reefed and others had not, and only smacks seemed to have tops'ls up. Round the Colne Bar and then into wide open seas in time for the smack fleet to come through the gaffers who had started 15 mins earlier. It would have made a fine sight from Clacton, but the beaches were understandably deserted. In fact only a few of the lead boats actually went to Clacton Pier - they were seen by the rest to turn sharply to starboard and head out to a race buoy which was exactly

where a little note in the race instructions (but not on the list of race marks) had said it would be; rather less 'off Clacton Pier' and rather more 'off the Gunfleet Sands'. This gave those behind (and those who read the instructions properly) a distinct advantage and bunched the fleet up a bit for some interesting encounters at the gybe mark. Back against the slackening tide and a beat back into the river Colne. Close to low water now so a rather confined sailing area which inevitably gave a few skippers some heart-stopping moments (or should that be boat-stopping moments?).

[The big smack Pioneer, which was about the only boat



to hang on to her topsail and was doing well as a consequence, went aground less than a mile from the finish! Ed] A very wet and bumpy ride ensued for those crossing Bench Head in big waves with squalls rushing through to make life harder. Not much rain to speak of, but the sea was everywhere – it found every crack in the waterproofing of boats and crews alike: down the back of the neck as the boats slammed into waves, or up to the neck for the man on the foredeck, or whooshing up the sleeves of those fumbling with sheets on the leeward side with stiff cold fingers. A slight advantage was stolen by those who tacked in to the Jaywick shore to find calmer waters and perhaps less tidal ebb. (Who ever would have thought we'd find ourselves grateful for Jaywick?). All this under the watchful eye(s) of Pete the Knife and Bernie Heatherington, who did sterling work on the RIB lent by Nick from the Park'n Ride - our thanks to all of them. Then "phew!", over the finish line.

Winners

First over the line was Crow, with Rob and Lena holding off Spellbound to the bitter end. Crow did not get line honours officially, as the smacks started later and had to be taken into account, but she was awarded Tarka's Pin for the boat which travelled the longest distance under sail to compete. Spellbound, for those who haven't met her yet, is sail-maker Mark Butler's gaff-rigged Etchells 22, a class designed in the 1960s as a 3-man (Bermudan) keelboat for the Olympics and extensively modified by Mark to give the appearance of an Edwardian day-sailer. She was awarded the Boat World Rose Bowl for the first boat in OGA Class 2 on elapsed time.



Capriccio



Fly at Colne Bar

First on elapsed time (and thus taking line honours) was Paul Winter's smack Maria. She received the Britannia Trophy for the first gaff-rigged boat of any class on elapsed time and the Tim Bolton Cup for the first fishing boat or ex-fishing boat on elapsed time.

The premier trophy, the raison d'être of the whole event, is The East Coast Old Gaffers Trophy awarded to the first boat over 50 years old in OGA Class 1 or 2. This year's winner was Kestrel (1891); well done and congratulations to skipper James Palmer.

Previous winners of the Big One have often also been made Commodore of the Area for the year, but not so this year – that accolade goes to the first East Coast OGA member on corrected time and whilst Kestrel was the first boat over 50 years old, there was one younger boat which beat her on handicap; winner of the Cornish Shrimper Trophy and winner of the Stone Trophy for the first boat under 50 years old in OGA Class 1 or 2 was Whistler. She was sailed skillfully by John Sheldrake, who we are pleased to welcome as the new Commodore of the Area! He took away a fine winner's pennant courtesy of James Lawrence Sails (many thanks to Mark Butler for that).

The two Tom Felgate Trophies are awarded to Bermudan boats: the Tom Felgate Cruiser Trophy was won by Mike McCarthy in Elfreda ahead of Maid of Tesa and Cirrus, and the Tom Felgate Racer Trophy went to Greg Dunn's hotshot racer Black Diamond.

Other Gaffers to take home silverware, or ceramic-ware, included (in order of their final position) Lettie May, Nick Hillman's Memory which won

the Cruiser Trophy; Victoria which won the Hunt Trophy for the first ex-working boat in OGA Class 2; and Charm sailed by Robert and Lorna Hill which won the Titheridge Trophy for first boat sailed by husband and wife or partners only. Odessa came in after 2pm with a ripped jib and took both the Old Harry Trophy (last within the time limit) and the Plodder's Pot (last!).

Transcur raced with her smack sisters of course and was neck and neck with Fly when a squall struck and washed a bagged sail clean off the deck. Precious moments lost in its retrieval put "Trannie" into 6th place of the smacks.

And the one to watch for next year? Cormorant, Steve Meakin's newly acquired gaff yawl started late but stormed through the fleet in full sail with crew on the rail to finish with the leaders. If Steve gets himself a new watch for the next race, then Kestrel beware!

Sue Lewis



Cormorant

R&R

We were invited for a beer by the Colne Smack Preservation Society; an interesting brew, very kind of them... but one gaffer swore later that he read on the barrel the immortal words 'Stockholm Tar'! After the prize-giving more conventional drinking in the Colne Yacht Club was followed by a very good value supper and musical entertainment by the excellent Golden Rivets Shanty Band, with a popular contribution from Jimmy Lawrence and from members of the Gaffer's Band. And talking of unconventional brews – what exactly was the strange (rum?) cocktail that bermudan champion Mike McCarthy and his crew Dutch Dave from

Dartford (who isn't called Dave, and doesn't live in Dartford) were swigging from their trophy?

Rowing Races

Sunday morning brought an enthusiastic crowd of OGA members to take part in races on the boating pond in rowing boats kindly lent by the 4th Brightlingsea Scouts. In the single sculls competition those taking the inshore route did not have the same success with it as on the previous day, as oars connected disastrously with overhanging shrubbery. Winners of the Men's single sculls were James Pratt (also known as James II) from Kestrel and of the Ladies' race Julia Raper from Ellen. To complement their 'couple' trophy in the main race of the weekend, Rob and Lorna Hill of Charm were winners of the mixed doubles, and the Dragon Boat winners were a crack team comprising Pete the Knife, Nick Hillman, James Palmer and James Pratt.

After lunch, the open boats (OGA Class 3) set off from Colne Yacht Club to race to Wivenhoe,



Winning bermudan Mike McCarthy

followed by the parade of sail of the Old Gaffers led by local ex-police boat Victoria. After an orderly beat up the river with bigger and faster boats than Victoria obliged to hold station behind her (very gratifying for Howard) and then into Wivenhoe Sailing Club for a splendid Hog Roast and Barbecue.

Winner of the open boat race was Jimmy Lawrence on Native with Papa Stour in second place (Pete the Knife Elliston) and Two brothers third (Mark Bielecki).

Our thanks go to Wivenhoe Sailing Club yet again for the warm welcome and delicious spread – a fine end to a fine event. And thanks to all our sponsors and those involved in organising the event – it must have taken a lot of hard work for things to run as smoothly as they did.

Sue Lewis (Victoria)

And now a different perspective from lower down the fleet from never say die Robinetta....

Race morning started dull and windy with the forecast F5-6, occasionally F7. No one was sure we would get to race at all, but we made our way to the start line by Bateman's tower, off the entrance to Brightlingsea harbour. As usual, the hard question was how much to reef, as the first leg would be a run down the Colne; after reefing too much on the Crouch, I decided one turn round the boom would be enough, but this meant we were carrying much more sail than most of the boats our size; however, Robinetta is heavy and deep and needs all the pull she can get.

We tacked back and forwards in the minutes before the start, avoiding other boats, sometimes by a very small margin. We didn't manage to tune into the right channel to get the race advice, but we heard the guns and got off to a really good start near the front of the pack. The fast boats soon left us behind and we found ourselves in a little race of our own with Plum and Ellen. Julia on Ellen told

us it was course no.2 which was basically out to Clacton and back, but thankfully not going out to the Spitway buoy where it could be expected to be really rough; nominally 18.5 nm in total. The sun came out, there was a lot of blue sky, and with wind and tide together it was really very nice and calm running out of the Colne.

Our little pack jockeyed for position, sometimes getting very close indeed. Colin, single handed on Plum, easily kept up with us, or led. We found ourselves on the outside at the Colne Bar buoy mark and the others got ahead, but we kept up pretty well. From Colne Bar to Clacton Pier was a glorious reach – heaps of wind with the ebb pushing us along – we hit at least 7 knots over the ground.

The big smacks started 15 minutes behind us and passed us soon after Colne Bar. It was a fantastic sight and Pioneer looked particularly fine, carrying her topsail over reefed main.

The turning point was a specially laid race buoy of which we had the accurate position but, along with most of the fleet, we just assumed it would be near the pier. As we got nearer, we saw the leading boats crossing in front of us and realised the mark must be further out. We adjusted course and this helped us recover some of our position relative to Plum and Ellen. In fact, we rounded the buoy just behind Deirdre, Plum and Ellen and in front of the pretty little lugger Constance.

Suddenly the wind came up and the seas became less friendly as it was wind against tide, and we immediately felt less comfortable and considered another reef but only got a couple of inches in. We were really heeling now and the water was coming



The fleet at Wivenhoe

in under the leeward bulwarks, but it felt safe. The leading classic bermudans who had left 30 minutes behind us now passed us, but not all the bermudans caught the gaffers today. The only upwind leg was the final beat up the Colne to the finish line, so the theoretically better downwind performance of the gaffers was working in our favour.

The reach back to the Colne Bar was a bit more stressful than the outbound leg; the wind was stronger and we had the tide against us, so the seas were also less friendly. We very gradually gained ground against Deirdre and Ellen but my, it was hard work.

We now needed to decide where to turn up-river, and many of the leading boats seemed to be going a very long way up the Blackwater before tacking. I didn't want too many short tacks – Robinetta had shown us again last month in the Crouch that short tacks are her weakest point – and she needs a decent amount of way on for the main to start to pull.

Then, as we approached the Bench Head we came under a nasty rain squall. The wind came up, the seas knocked us back and it became very hard to control the boat. The others were having problems too, but they were already reefed down quite hard. We dropped the peak to kill the power in the main

and let off the staysail halyard. The wind was too strong to think about furling the jib without going onto a run and we were still racing! So we reefed the main right down to the bottom hoop and that was enough to bring the boat back under control. It was definitely blowing a steady force 7 for several minutes. We had managed this without actually stopping, but we still had to decide when to tack; Deirdre was still heading west and Ellen had fallen off to leeward

Then we saw the frapping line was wound round the port jib sheet and we couldn't tack until that was sorted. This took a while and we didn't manage to sail properly while it was being sorted, so when we did tack we found ourselves heading straight back to the Colne Bar, so we kept that leg quite short. By now the squall had passed, so we put up a bit more main and raised the staysail again, but during all this messing around, we were caught up and passed by Janty.

Luckily, the tide was now flooding up the Colne, and we managed several reasonably long tacks up the river, making on both legs. We had a little race with Janty for a while, but she decided to go much further on the east tack than we did and we lost her. With no working echo sounder we used a combination of the GPS chart and Alison's geologist's eyes to decide when to tack and it seemed to work well. Suddenly we spotted Ellen



Plum and Emma from Robinetta

again; she had taken a very different course, but after a tack or two we found ourselves heading NW towards the last mark, the no.8 buoy, with Ellen just in front.

We now had a real race to the finish; Melvyn and Julia are good friends, but a race is a race! Melvyn put his big staysail up and we beat into the Colne, neither boat giving any ground. Robinetta was tacking really well and we did slightly shorter tacks than Ellen and consequently had to put in one extra one but I think this must have kept us in the main tidal stream because we ended up in front. The river bends to the left past the entrance to Brightlingsea creek so the last tack left us with a straight reach past the finish line. We finally heard the horn and then one for Ellen a few seconds behind; I don't know who has the lower handicap - I wonder where we came on the final ranking! When we got back we heard that many boats had retired from equipment failure or because they were too light for the wind conditions, so we felt very pleased with our boat, and for once, happy with our seamanship.

[For the record, Robinetta crossed the line 56 secs ahead of Ellen, but finished just behind her on corrected time.]

Royal Hospital School Rally - 2010

We knew that if we had plenty of participants it might work, and we knew that if the weather was kind to us it might also, just, work.

Well, it did work - in buckets full.

Boats began to arrive at Wrabness from Friday lunch time onwards and by about 10:00pm there were no free moorings and several boats were anchored in the shallows of Holbrook Bay.

Next morning, and bang on schedule, tenders started to ferry crews into Holbrook Creek and the multitude then made their sedate way up to the Royal Hospital School, arriving outside the Dining Hall at about 11:25. At precisely 11:30, the doors swung open and we were ushered in to partake of School Dinner, sitting among the students all of whom were only too happy to chat about school life at the RHS.

For many, however, the high spot of the visit to the school was seeing the sparrow hawk's nest high up in the school wall.

After lunch it was back to Holbrook Creek and prepare to return across the Stour to Wrabness; an extra mini-event had been dropped into the weekend programme in the form of a Smack's Boat Race from Holbrook back to Wrabness and at the last moment Paul Masters (Clytie) suggested handing the Smack's Boats over to the younger participants who didn't waste any time taking up the challenge. The start line was very nearly perfect



Out by the gybe mark



Royal Hospital School, Holbrook

and all enjoyed a very swift race in what proved to be a delightfully fresh sea breeze.

The Mini Smack's Boat Race was eventually won by the crew of Papa Stour.

On the way back to Wrabness it was quite interesting to come across all four of the RHS Shrimpers rafted up to an anchored 'Mother Ship'; obviously someone had decided that this year they would be 'on station' in good time for the race.

15:30 saw the start of the larger boats' race out to Pye End and back under clear blue skies and a fresh easterly sea breeze, testing most competitors with a lively beat down the Stour. At least one boat found the pudding mixture just above Shotley, but they shall remain anonymous.

Reverie retired early in order that their crew would have time to get ashore at Wrabness and get the barbecue, and Lillibullero retired after the local crew member, who was on the helm, passed the wrong side of the Ramsey buoy, even though it was he who had laid the course - so no excuses there.

The sail back up river effectively turned into a laundry day with every stitch of canvas being hoisted. (Nice water sail Transcur).

Eventual winners were Victoria in the gaff class and Elfreda in the Bermudan class.

In the meantime, the small boats race started at 16:00 and comprised a real eclectic mix of boats including the four RHS Shrimpers, two boats from Holbrook (a Cape Cutter and a Pandora) and numerous cobsles etc. from Wrabness.

In due course, Lettuce was 1st OGA boat home, with Bluebelle 2nd; Spindrift was 1st Holbrook boat home whilst Samphire took 2nd prize.

Two of the RHS Shrimpers were awarded 1st and 2nd prizes as were two of the five participants who took part in the Fishing Competition.

Then it was time for the barbecue; John Ambrose volunteered to do all the cooking and proved to be a first rate chef. He might just have a job for life!

All partook of beef burgers, lamb burgers and huge sausages in rolls that were well up to the task size-wise.

By about 10:30 it was time for the Holbrook boats to begin their journey back to Holbrook Creek.

And so ended a very delightful (and full) 6th annual Royal Hospital School Rally.

As the Holbrook boats made their way back across the Stour it was interesting to look back and see a dozen, maybe more, anchor lights twinkling in the gloom.



Charm has tops'l trouble

Forthcoming Events

August Classics Cruise; 21st – 30th

For many members, this is the event of the year, combining as it does the sociability of beach barbecues and club/pub dinners with the conviviality of passage making in company and the challenge of racing in less familiar waters.

An outline of the programme, together with an entry form, was in the previous issue of Eastcoaster; get your entry in now, as space at some of the events is limited and it will cost you more if you delay entering until the start of the event. Remember, you don't have to take part in the whole of the extensive programme; dip in and out if you wish, but be at Ipswich Haven marina on Sat 21st for the start!

Call Pete Thomas on 01473 832808 if you have any queries.

Pin Mill Regatta; 4th September

This is an event organised by the Pin Mill SC, not by the OGA, but they have been so co-operative in recent years and are such nice folk, we think e ought to show up in strength. Racing starts at 10.00, I understand there are separate class for gaffers and classic bermudans, and there will be a barbecue in the evening. Why not leave your boat in the area after the end of the August Classics and join in?

Maldon Town Regatta; 11th September

No advance details as yet, but it is expected to follow the usual pattern of a race in the Blackwater starting at the Nass Beacon, lunch at anchor off Osea Island, then a Parade of Sail up to the Hythe at Maldon. Then in the evening, an OGA anniversary dinner to celebrate the founding of the Area in 1963. Your contact is Peter Maynard 01521 852808



Victoria at the RHS

I wonder just how many boats we could fit in to the Holbrook Bay anchorage.....?

Special thanks must go to Andy Woollard (ICT Director at RHS) for organising lunch, Charles Boughton (Sailing Instructor) for his continued enthusiasm for this event and for ensuring the safe arrival of the RHS Shrimpers and Sarah (Head of 6th form) for looking after our every need during lunch. Unfortunately retired Harbour Master Peter Page was not on hand to officiate this year; he was at home recovering from a nasty head cold, but the youngest of the Holbrook Robertson clan, Clive, was able to deputise in Peter's absence.

Mike Robertson



Elfreda at the RHS

Backstay

Something a little different to conclude this issue; a book review. Rob Williamson was so taken with this little book that he wrote a review for us.

'Ode to Joy' a Winklebrig's tale, by Charles and Janet Harker.

Joy starts life as a barge boat, built at Maldon by the late Alf Last in Cook's Barge shed. After several owners, she comes into the care of Charles and Janet Harker, when her adventures really start. As they move to different parts of the country, so Joy goes with them. She becomes a film star on the East Coast; in Scotland, on the Solway, she is lost in the quicksands for SIX years; then to Cornwall where she sees a ghost, and lives in a Secret River; she stands out at a Douarnenez festival; and is vandalised on the Norfolk Broads. Finally, the original being too old and battered to be repaired, a new Joy was ordered to be built in Maldon, using the original shape and measurements. Full circle!

This is a truly rare book, beautifully written as if Joy is telling her own story, and illustrated with delightful pen and ink drawings by Janet. A book to be treasured, and read again and again, and I give it the highest recommendation possible! Buy it, and be entranced.

Available from Jardine Press Ltd 2010. 210x210mm, 64 pages text, 16pages colour photos, £8.95.

Through the internet, or by phone direct from Janet Harker, 01206827637.

Rob Williamson

That's all for this time; thanks to Sue Lewis, Julian and Alison Cable, Don Garman, Mike Robertson and others who have submitted articles and also to photographers Ian, Julian, Caroline, Wendy, Sue, Jacque and Peter, who have all combined to make this an interesting issue – you've no idea how pleasing it is for an editor to be snowed under with text and photos!

The next issue of Eastcoaster is due out in mid-November 2010, so submissions by mid-September please, to the editor at the snail or e-mail addresses below; personal experiences of this year's events are particularly welcome.

Bernard Patrick
80 Rickstones Rd
Witham
Essex CM8 2ND
tel: 01376 516420
e-mail: bernard.patrick@waitrose.com

Finally, could I remind members who may have changed address to tell me, please? On the other hand, if you have told us of your move but are still not getting the newsletter, let me know. Thank you.

Production by Steve Daley-Yates; steve@xited.co.uk Printed by Reprohouse of Marks Tey, tel: 01206 213 276

Boat Register

Don't forget! The Boat Register still awaits your boat's details and pictures. So far there are over 50 boats published. It would be nice to get this up to 100 by the AGM.

www.eastcoastclassics.co.uk/boatregister/



Maldon