

# Dinghy Cruising

The Quarterly Journal Of The Dinghy Cruising Association



Autumn 2021 | Bulletin N<sup>o</sup> 251



- The PicoMicroYacht
- *Curlew's* Northern Migration
- Building *Wee Lassie*

- Shetland: Viking Adventure
- Oughtred's Arctic Tern
- Hilbre Island and the MCC



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# Editor's Letter

*Keith Muscott*

AS I WRITE, OUR MEMBERSHIP IS ONLY TWENTY short of a thousand, so we may have reached that figure by the time you are reading this. With the addition of four returning members, the New Members pages in this issue total 95. I had thought that the weekly number of applicants would dwindle as the days shortened, but not a bit of it.

I am aware that some of our more seasoned sailors feel that the nature of the DCA is changing because of the rising numbers, but I can't for the life of me see this. Ask yourself if you are still sailing with the people who were always with you on the water. The answer undoubtedly will be yes, more or less, given that some are sadly no longer with us. There will be some new faces among the old ones, but that is all to the good, surely?

The really big change is the growing interest among the young. Our youngest paid-up member is 15 – but if you want to take into account those who are with us on their parents' ticket, then Guy Martin, aged 8, should take pole position (*see page 23*). He actively sails the family Heron with his father, as a true bow man in charge of the jib sheets. He named the boat, and a very fine name it is – *Sea Tiger*. The Martin family are building a

new boat and Guy will have the name for that one ready when the time comes.

The journals over the last couple of years have had articles that included young sailors with the same kind of spirit and skill as Guy. This is bound to be a good thing. Surely we do not want the Association to die out with us? The torch has to be passed on.

You will find the rally reports early in the running order this time. It is intentional, as it was so heartening to see such an enthusiastic outpouring of sailing narratives. The will to get on the water has challenged the threat we all have been living under, so this is a celebration!

Incoming members are often concerned about the suitability of their boat for the DCA, despite our attempts to assure everyone that we are a 'broad church' and love all sailing vessels.

We sallied forth one day in September fielding a paddleboard, a thoroughbred sea kayak, a sailing canoe and an inflatable kayak. If you turn to Liz's report on Cobnor you will see another motley crew that exemplify variety. One point needs to be borne in mind, though; natural laws dictate that the larger and heavier your boat gets, the less likely it is that you will be able to enjoy 'thin water' in locations like this one, below. *KM*



Dave Bursnall (*right*) and me. Taken on the last evening of the meeting I mention in the last paragraph above.

We have just returned on a falling tide from accompanying William O'Keefe to Borth y Gest (which lies under Moel y Gest, the hill in the distance). Our own Gumotex Thaya kayak has left the foreshore. Dave's sailing canoe has been de-rigged and will be slid back on to his car's roof rack when it is empty of kit.

William crossed the estuary in a sea kayak. He also races 420s and owns an early Oughtred Whilly Boat. He is 15.

*Photograph  
by Jennifer Heney*

**All material for DC252 – paper, digital images and text – should be sent to Keith Muscott at the email or postal address given on page 2 as soon as possible.**

# President's Welcome

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## *Roger Barnes*



IT IS EXTRAORDINARY THE FREEDOM that the ownership of a small trailerable boat gives. This summer I have enjoyed cruises in a wide variety of places, trailing my cruising dinghy to new sailing waters or revisiting places that have become old friends.

As I write this my mind is still full of memories of an extended cruise in the Venetian lagoon, which included living in my boat for a few days moored on the island of Venice itself and using her as a base for exploring the city. I have been to Venice before, but this was by far the pleasantest time I have ever spent there.

Immediately after returning from Venice, I had an appointment at the Southampton Boat Show to give a talk on dinghy cruising. I have been to the Southampton Show before and remember it as including quite a few small boats. Those days seem to be gone, I am afraid, and the dinghy presence was very light this year. There were just rows and rows and rows of large yachts and power boats. I felt like crying out from the stage:

'Why do you want to buy a big yacht, you fools? -- Do you realise I have just come back from Venice?'

So I did. But I am not sure it made any difference....

Once again I write to welcome new members to the Association. I hope you will be very happy with us. We are a modest organisation of friends, with few rules and no airs and graces. We have been carrying on in much the same way for 60-odd years now, keeping largely under the radar. But times change, and perhaps it is time to shout about what we do a bit more.

There are many more sailors out there who would benefit from adopting our ways. To treat boat ownership primarily as a route to a life full of rich experiences, rather than an opportunity to cut a dash in an impressive yacht. Talk about us with your friends. Share our journal. For surely one of the best routes to happiness in this life is the ownership of a small boat and having new waters to explore. *RB*

'Surprisingly like the Norfolk Broads: the remote backwaters of the Venetian Lagoon...' *Roger Barnes*



# Welcome to our 95 New Members plus Returners

David Morton, Membership Secretary

4005	Michael Donnellan	No boat at the moment	Merseyside
4006	Philip Swain	Sailfish 565, Laser 13	Trailer sails to British coast and lakes
4007	Joachim Knigge	470, Seggerling and Dyas	Szczecin Lagoon (Oderhaff), Baltic Sea
4008	Nicky Rushton	Bay Raider Expedition	East Coast of England
4009	Charlie Foster	Mirror dinghy	Bowmoor Lake, Cotswolds
4010	Aled Edwards	No boat at the moment	North Wales and North West
4011	Stephen Singleton	Drascombe Lugger planned	East Coast of England
4012	Arjen de Vries	CLC Pocketship	Netherlands - Frisian Lakes, Wadden Sea
4013	Chris Clarke	Pakcanoe 150 converted to sail	River Thames, Chichester Harbour
4014	David Ritchie	No boat at the moment	South East England
4015	Glyn Jones	Mirror dinghy, Skipper 17	Lake District, Clyde, NE Coast
4016	David Atkinson	Jimmy Skiff II - sailing version	Loch Lomond, West Coast of Scotland
4017	Brendan Caden	Wayfarer, Devon Scaffie	Dwyrdd estuary, North Wales
4018	Stephen Leech	Com-Pac 16	North Carolina coast & rivers, USA
4019	Mike Kelly	No boat at the moment	South East England
4020	Adrian Rose	Falmouth Packet Co. "Tern II"	Netherlands inland waterways
4021	Adrian Stone	Flying Fifteen, Hitia 17 catamaran, Lymington pram dinghy, kayak	The Solent and SW England
4022	Suzan Wallace	Rescues and rehabilitates a variety of small craft to sail, row, paddle	Great Lakes to Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic seaboard and islands in the USA
4023	Marcin Urban	Drascombe Lugger	Zalew Szczeciński, Poland
4024	Matthew Barrow	Cornish Cormorant	Southampton Water, The Solent
4025	Charles Rees	Wharram Tiki 21	Windermere
4026	David Holland	Kayak, sailing boat planned	Clywedog Reservoir, Mid-Wales
4027	Robert Critchley	Mirror dinghy	Ullswater
4028	Ian Blanks-Walden	Wanderer	Chew Valley Lake
4029	Tony Cleal	Fareham Lugger	Portsmouth Harbour
4030	Hamish Firth	Devon Dayboat	South Coast of England
4031	Paul Laird-Measures	Gull Mk3a	East and West Coasts of Scotland
4032	Frederic Rozee	RS Venture, Sailart 20, Lite Boat XP16	Aquitaine, Mediterranean Sea
4033	Micheál de Barra	No boat at the moment	South East England
4034	Michael Marsh	Mark 1 Gull, kayak	South Coast of England
4035	Steve Berry	Westerly Nimrod	Rutland Water
4036	Per Berntsen	Drascombe Longboat	Trondheim Fjord, Norwegian coast
4037	Michael Havard	No boat at the moment	South East England
4038	Peter Taylor	Morbic 12, sailing canoe	South Wales, Lake District
4039	David Fleming	No boat at the moment	Carsington or Rutland Water
4040	Frédéric Lopès	Jouet 17 Foxtrot	Golfe du Morbihan
4041	David Brand	Enterprise	Firth of Forth
4042	Karl Brenstuhl	Bay Hen 21	USA East coast
4043	Carl Michael	Not known	Port Phillip, Australia
4044	Tim Price	Miracle	River Mersey, Ullswater
4045	Bryn Vaile	Deben Lugger	South Coast and SW England
4046	James Thomas	Wayfarer	Solent, South Coast

4048	Michael Hymas	Mark 1 Wayfarer	Chichester Harbour, The Solent
4049	Nick Edmunds	Miracle, Cornish Crabbers Adventure 12	Cole Mere, Broads, Lakes
4050	Tony Laurillard	Self built 21 foot gaff cutter	South West England
4051	Paul Rawlings	Laser 1, Otter	Mercers Park, South Coast
4052	John Jeffrey	Sea Eagle 380x Explorer kayak with sail	Ardnamurchan
4053	Nick Evans	Phoenix III, self built 15 ft sail and oar	Castle Semple, Clyde, Loch Lomond
4054	Luke de St Croix	GP14	Ardingly Reservoir, South Coast
4055	Andrew Barnett	No boat at the moment	South West France
4056	Einar Gjøen	Laerling 12ft keelboat	Southern Norway
4057	Steven Moss	Mk1 Wayfarer, Albin Viggen	Firth of Tay
4058	Daniel Piper	Topper, cruising dinghy planned	East Coast
4059	Ben Murphy	Otter dinghy	River Severn
4060	Adam Pritchard-Jenkins	Lugger, Mirror, kayak	Lake District, Scotland West Coast
4061	Ian Watthews	Falmouth Bass Boat	Coniston Water, Lake District
4062	Grant Kinnaid	12' (unregistered) Tideway dinghy	Upper Thames
4063	David Turtle	No boat at the moment	Chichester Harbour, South Coast
4064	Lewis Gammon	No boat at the moment	South East England
4065	Hilary Sharp	Wayfarer Mk. 4	Caversham Lakes, Upper Thames
4066	Said Lakehal	Wayfarer Mk. 2	Portland Harbour, South Coast
4067	Joseph Manning	Joel White design 15' Marshcat	Chesapeake Bay, USA
4068	Anthony Chadwick	Beneteau Cabochard, Mirror-rigged Zef	Coast of Brittany, France
4069	Oli Barker	Salcombe Yawl	Salcombe Harbour, Bigbury Bay
4070	Matt Newell	Drascombe Coaster	Pembrokeshire coast, Severn Estuary
4071	Holly Puckering	14' Huon Pine gaff-rigged clinker dinghy 11' Tamar class dinghy Mirror – sailed by Luca aged 12 Sabot – sailed by Gene aged 10	South East Tasmania, Australia
4072	Charissa Buhler	1967 wooden Wayfarer	Traeth Bach, Tremadog Bay, N. Wales
4073	Thomas Otho-Briggs	12' gaff-rigged clinker dinghy	Angoulême, France
4074	Pat Ditton	No boat at the moment	South Coast
4075	Henry Townend	Haven 12 1/2	South Coast
4076	Chris Beresford	Topper Topaz Omega	Caversham Lakes, South Coast
4077	David Kelley	Mirror dinghy	River Thames, South Coast
4078	Colin Blewett	Yachting World Dayboat, 17' Whitehall International 12, West Wight Potter	Poole Harbour, South Coast
4079	Elisabeth Anderson	Enterprise	Northumberland, River Thames
4080	Glenn Covell	Coastal Whammel	East / South East Coast
4081	David Nunns	Mirror dinghy	River Yare, Norfolk Broads
4082	Henry Holland	Bayraider 20	River Thames
4083	David Cooper	Wayfarer purchase planned	West Midlands and UK coast
4084	Stephen Foyle	Swallow Boats Bay Raider	Youghal Bay, Irish coast and loughs
4085	Daniel Clark	Sea kayaks rigged for sailing	Gulf of Mexico, US East Coast, Great Lakes
4086	Fernando Valenzuela	Building a Lancha velera chilota	Northern coast of Chile
4087	Philip Middlehurst	Hartley Wanderer, Mirror dinghy	Clowbridge Reservoir, Lake District
4088	Joe Portlock	Wayfarer	The Humber
4089	Mogens Sørensen	Manta 19 trailer sailer	Øresund, Denmark

4090	John Albrecht	Iain Oughtred Arctic Tern	California, USA
4091	Tim Stacey	Point Jude 16; Rebel 16; O'Day 22	Michigan and Indiana lakes, USA
4092	Christopher Wicks	Cape Cutter 19, Lune Whammell	Aegean Sea and Pagasetic Gulf, Greece
4093	Don Everitt	Tideway	North Yorkshire
4094	Chris Yalland	GRP Wayfarer Mk1a	South Coast
4095	Paul Hilton	Sails club boats at the moment	Wigan, North West
4096	Mark Austen	Modified Fairey Falcon	River Great Ouse, Essex coast and rivers

We also welcome back four old hands:

3468	Ian Barrett	Sport 14	Langstone Harbour, The Solent
3180	Richard Crook	Swale Pilot 16' cutter, Leader	English Midlands, Wales
3515	Jude Miller	Drascombe Scaffie	Gulf of Mexico, USA
1598	Nicholas Bayley	Wayfarer	Thames Valley

## DCA Business and Announcements

### Annual General Meeting 2022

Our Annual General Meeting in 2022 will once again be held via Zoom. **It will take place on Saturday 19th February at 10.00.** When the details have been finalised there will be a page in the Members Section of the DCA website which will provide all the information you require to take part in the meeting.

There will be a registration form for you to complete, which will give you the opportunity to propose items for the Agenda or nominate candidates for a place on the Committee. In January you will be able to access the Officers' reports on this page and submit any questions you have.

**At 11.30 the Peter Bick lecture will be given by Michael Storer, Australian boat designer.**

### North West Planning Meeting 2022

The meeting to discuss and plan the NW regional rally programme for 2022 will be held by Zoom at 11 a.m. Saturday, 5th February 2022. Details will be sent to NW members by email and posted in the North West section of the Forum nearer the time: <https://forum.dinghycruising.org.uk/North-West-f4394.html>

'Having been NW Regional Secretary now for more than a decade, I feel it is time for me to relinquish the position, so after hosting the meeting on 5th February 2022, I intend to stand down and let someone else take my place. An item of business for the meeting, therefore, will be to vote in a new Secretary. Please feel free to contact me to discuss this role if you are interested in taking it on.

John Hughes'  
[jmxhughes@phonecoop.coop](mailto:jmxhughes@phonecoop.coop)  
 0151 632 0178



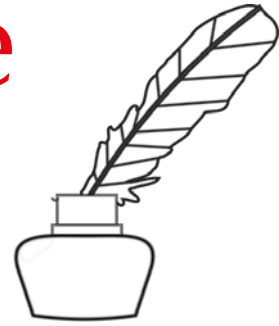
Some of the members who participated in the AGM Zoom Meeting, 2021

### Winter Meetings on Zoom?

This is just a reminder that the DCA has a Zoom account which can be used by members to hold a meeting if they wish. Perhaps a group would like to invite one of their number to give a talk or to share their stories of summer cruises or discuss a boat building project. If so you can contact the Website Editor and ask for the meeting to be scheduled at the time you require. She will email you the link information and start the meeting on the day, before handing over the host controls to whoever is in charge.



# Correspondence



## **From Bob Lomas: Remembering the DCA**

Bob is a former member of the DCA, as some of you will recall, and he contacted us through the website for our help in reconnecting with one of his old friends.

This led to a discussion with Jenny, in which he learned of Len Wingfield's passing. We decided to send him a complimentary journal after he said, 'Of the organisations I have belonged to during my long life, the times I spent in the company of the DCA are without doubt some of the happiest I can remember...'

Then he wrote this letter:

Dear Jennifer,

Today I received the truly delightful copy of *Dinghy Cruising*, for which I warmly thank you. One of the very best produced magazines I have seen for a long time and I say that as a one-time national magazine editor and publisher.

Although I have lived an active and very varied long life there are very few men I have met over that time that I greatly admired and Len was most definitely one of them, so the coverage of his long sailing history plus the many salutary remarks within the pages afforded me so many happy memories of our sailing times together. Also, I was pleased to see the picture of Liz Baker, who was always so helpful to everyone.

Having been away from sailing for so long the interesting articles relating to classic small boats and sailing them, all superbly laid out and presented, whisked me instantly back to the sparkling lights and smells of the sea combined with happy memories of such good company.

I still have to sell my WW Potter. (Perhaps I have not been trying hard enough!) Alas, my knees are worn out so my cruising days are over, but I now have a very nice Mirror to play with in the garden; so who knows?

I have been in touch with David Sumner and plan to visit him.

With Kind Regards,  
Bob.

## **From Andrew Kewell: Channel Crossings**

Hi Keith,

Congratulations on yet another superb edition of *Dinghy Cruising*; the publication goes from strength to strength! *Chapeau*, as they say on the Tour de France.

With regard specifically to the Correspondence Section, I'm afraid I was quite frankly appalled at the bigoted content of the letter from Patrick Arnold. The suggestion that we should all act like Stasi agents in reporting these poor victims or those who shelter them, is simply atrocious. I'd be very interested to know what Mr Arnold would do if the roles were reversed and he found himself needing to flee with his family to save their lives rather than continuing to enjoy the

full benefits of our wealthy Western lifestyles. These migrants deserve our sympathy, not vindictive counter-measures.

Best wishes,  
Andrew Kewell

PS I write a lot of letters to my own pathetic MP but wouldn't dream of forwarding them to you for publication.

## **From Tom Sparrow: Better than The Beano? Surely not...**

Hi Keith,

As a new member, I was pleased to receive my first paper copy of the Journal a few weeks ago, and surprisingly impressed by the size of it. I've been a member of the National Trust seemingly forever, the RYA for a few years, the Camping & Caravanning Club before that, and have had various other 'professional' organisation magazines over the years. Thinking the DCA a smaller and more low-budget club, I was expecting something closer to a parish magazine in comparison. How wrong I was!

Before I got many pages in, I was surprised to see my name in print already. My big brother made it into the pages of Who's Who a couple of years ago, but I now feel that I can hold my own again at family gatherings.

Apart from all that, the most amazing thing to me was how completely drawn in I was. In any magazine I normally find some interesting articles and some which are more of a glance at the pictures. The RYA, while doing a great job, always felt somewhat out of my league, the new cruising maps aside. In all my years I cannot think of a single other magazine I've received or bought where I have steadfastly read through every single article and report, let alone with the fascination and joy that I read through this one. Possibly when I got the Dandy as a child – I was never so much of a Beano fan, for some reason – but certainly not since.

I'm now steadfastly combing through my diary looking for a meet that I can get along to. Unfortunately it is not looking very easy with my current schedule.

Even if it's a year until I can, I will certainly be holding my membership just for the magazines.

My thanks to you, and everyone who contributes to it. It's a wonderful publication and I'm thoroughly looking forward to the next one.

Happy sailing!  
Tom.



# Listening to New Members...7

## Holly Puckering #4071

**H**AVE SAILED SINCE I WAS A BABY WITH MY FAMILY on trailer sailers and in dinghies. I was raised in Aotearoa, New Zealand, but now live in Tasmania with my two sons Gene, 10 and Luca, 12.

We own the following dinghies:

**TipSea:** Mirror dinghy 63093 with unique pink and orange sails made by local sailmaker Mr Graney when red sailcloth was hard to find in 1980. Restored this winter and a joy to sail!

**Lucky 7:** a Sabot which is a 2.4 metre (eight-foot) cat-rigged dinghy sailed throughout Australia. It is the most popular kids' training boat in this country. Ours is of unknown build date, probably around 1970-1975, with the hull number 398. No evidence of her previous custodians has been uncovered. All we know is that she sailed from Sandy Bay at the Derwent Sailing Squad in 1983 and competed in the Tas Sabot Championships in 1991-92.

**Pearl:** a local design, 'Tamar' class, c1949. These general-purpose, lightweight centreboard dinghies were common in Tasmania in the mid-20th century, used for such diverse purposes as racing under sail, rowing, fishing or as a yacht tender. Ours was originally named *Pop-Eye*, T18. It is made from King Billy pine and ply and is currently under restoration. The original rigging was in very poor condition but she has a lug rig installed by the last owner. We plan her full restoration in Winter 2022.

**Courageous:** 14ft Huon Pine gaff-rigged clinker dinghy. She was designed by Master Shipwright Nick Masters and built from reclaimed Huon Pine from Strathgordon Dam in southern Tasmania, sunk as a part of the hydroelectricity scheme. She was launched in Sydney in 1982. During the 2002 documentary re-enacting Captain James Cook's voyage from Cook Town in Queensland to Jakarta ('The Ship: Retracing Cook's Endeavour Voyage'), she was used as a jolly boat for the replica *Endeavour*. She returned to Tasmania around 15 years ago and is intended for our primary cruising dinghy – if we can fix her centreboard leak!

**Audacious:** an International Cadet, built in the late 1970s by Tony Tate and his father in their garage in Sandy Bay. His children Susan and Michelle sailed her. She has Huon Pine gunnels, splashboards and carry handles. In 1982 she was purchased by Max Darcey and he completely rebuilt her in 1993 for the 1994 World Championships, which were held at Sandy Bay Sailing Club.

The boat floor was replaced with new, stronger marine ply and new buoyancy tanks were added on both sides. She was much heavier after the rebuild but performed much better upwind. In 1996 she was 2nd in the Australian Championships in Williamstown, Victoria, sailed by her new owner Michael Ashbolt. After this she was sold on and wasn't seen at the club until we



Albie, Gene and Holly on Snug River



Gene and Luca in our Tamar dinghy *Pearl* at Snug River and harbour. Bruny Island in the background. (below) Restored Mirror, *TipSea*



purchased her from a gentleman at Pittwater, who had had her stored beside a barn for many years.

We are all members of the Wooden Boat Guild, Tasmania. The WGBT exists to recognise and promote wooden boatbuilding in all its forms; educate and develop skills for future generations, including developing new building methods for wooden boats; research and keep a record of Tasmanian wooden boats; ensure the continual supply of Tasmanian speciality timbers for wooden boats; and encourage the use of wooden boats, particularly by young people. Tasmania is home to one of the world's finest boat building timbers, Huon Pine, so it's not surprising that the members are enthusiasts for fine wooden boats. Their home base, Hobart, is the destination for one of the world's premier offshore yacht races and host to Australia's premier wooden boat festival.

Huon Pine is a special and fast-disappearing Tasmanian timber. Piner's punts are unique small working boats, built to be hauled up and rowed down some of Tasmania's wild rivers gathering the Huon Pine. Timber-cutters working in the river systems of southern and western Tasmania used these punts to move themselves, equipment and stores deep into the forests. They were usually called 'puntos' in the nineteenth century: the specific term 'piner's punt' appears to be a creation of the late twentieth century.

Probably derived from the Norwegian pram dinghy, the traditional punt was a clinker-built vessel, based on a T-batten rather than solid keel with sufficient spring (*rocker*) to keep the snub bow out of the water even when moderately loaded. They were light but strong, and handled well in swiftly-running water. From the 1920s batten-seam carvel construction became popular. Sizes varied widely depending on intended use, but those used on the river systems were generally between 14 and 18ft.

Most pining operations came to an end during the Second World War as men were called up, and later years saw the introduction of motor-driven log haulers and helicopters to reach new stands of timber. Although no longer in use, piner's punts are a reminder of Tasmania's early logging traditions. Gene and Luca have been involved in a project at the WGBT helping to build a new piner's punt called *Claude*. It was launched on 23rd September.

There are no local dinghy cruising clubs where we are, so a number of like-minded families have banded together and created a social group called the 'Snake Island Dinghy Cruising Club'. The club is named firstly after Snake Island off North Bruny Island which is south of Hobart. The second reason for the name is that one of our members, Jon Tucker, has written a children's book called *Those Snake Island Kids*. The author writes: 'Although this is essentially a work of fiction, it is based on true events and real places. Snake Island exists, uninhabited, exactly as on Jess's (*one of the characters*) maps. The historical details are accurate, treasure hunters are still looking for the missing gold, and even the story of a group of teenage campers being marooned during a storm is real.'



Luca restoring *Audacious* – International Cadet – with *Lucky 7* – Sabot – finished beside him



Tamar – *Pearl* – on Pipe Clay Lagoon cruising day with *Lucky 7* sailing on her maiden launch behind



Luca, Gene and members of the WGBT on the launch day ceremony of the piner's punt *Claude*

The Snake Island Dinghy Cruising Club is no more than a social group at present but we are doing two very interesting projects besides helping each other with our boats, getting them ready for when the weather finally lifts. Firstly we plan to run a children's cruise 'discovery centre' for the upcoming Royal Hobart Regatta's 'Come and try day' and secondly we are coordinating the 'My first boat' project for the Australian Wooden Boat festival.

My current passion is helping children to bridge the gap between technology saturation and 'real life'. The presence and reality of technology can't be denied, but it can be productive. We make videos together of our adventures – the boys enjoy capturing footage and then editing the video and photos into a film about their day, once they have returned from the adventure. They enjoy planning voyages, telling stories and building their skills with the boats, the outdoors and technology. The poor children are probably victims of having a Speech Pathologist as a mother... I see the use of video technology and production as a way to build their competence and functional literacy as well as getting them outside. We use this approach to reduce the time they spend on unproductive technology (like hours of video games) and improve their skills that will contribute to their ability later in life. It's also a great way of extending our experiences beyond hauling the dinghies out of the water!

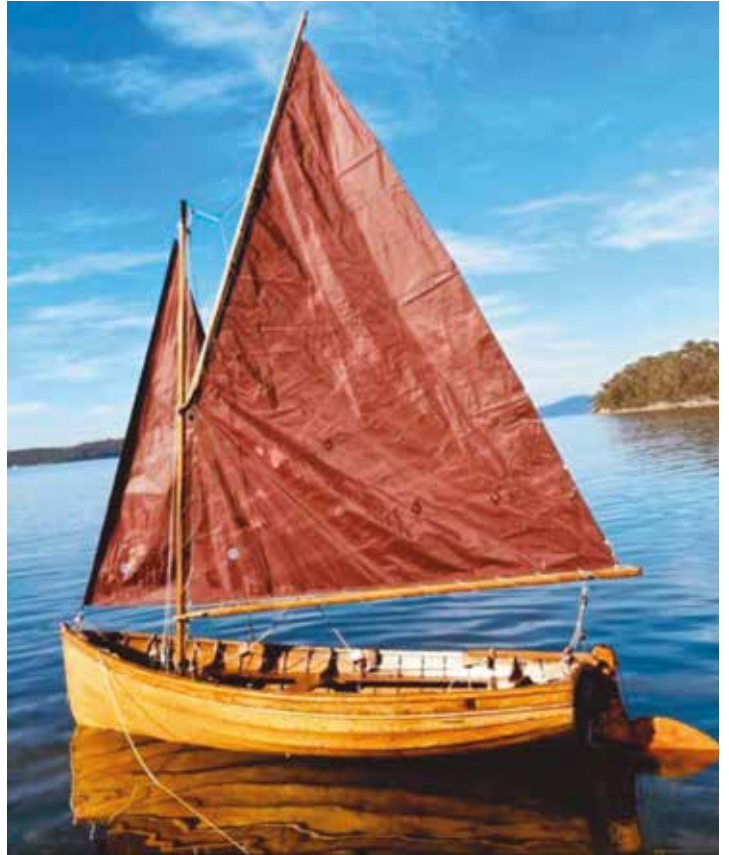
We often use our dinghy social days to create play opportunities. We take 'cannon balls' (anything that floats), floating plastic and foam cutlass and sabres, and sometimes even dress up for the occasion! Yesterday the boys launched a broadside assault on unsuspecting Wooden Boat Guild friends who were pottering in their dinghies. It certainly brings some excitement to an otherwise relaxing day.

The boys have also been learning survival and safety skills in preparation for the season of camping ahead as we come out of winter. They have saved and found camping gear through second hand marketplaces online, and done as many online safety and sailing courses as they can whilst movement is limited with current global events.

I look forward to being a DCA member. The boys are craving as much sailing reading material as possible and the journal would be a wonderful thing to look forward to.



Luca, Gene and their friend Lochie row a homemade skiff alongside *Courageous* in a pirate battle



(Above) *Courageous* 14ft gaff-rigged clinker dinghy (Below) Gene learning to make oars with Gary and Wayne from the WBG

★  
(Right) Model of a punter's punt.

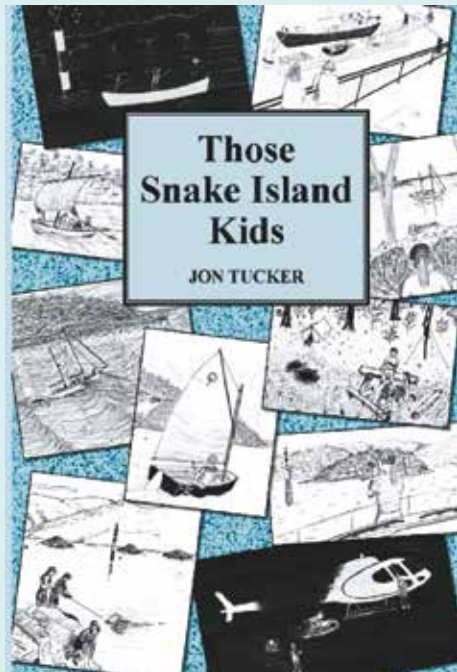
★  
Search YouTube for *Kids Afloat in a Wooden Boat*

★  
Read Jennifer's Review of Jon Tucker's book on the next page



# Those Snake Island Kids,

by Jon Tucker



Reviewed by Jennifer Heney

Publisher : 2; 2nd edition (9 Sept. 2018)

Language : English

Paperback : 172 pages

ISBN-10:0980835348

ISBN-13:978-09808353-4-2

Dimensions :15.24 x 1.09 x 22.86 cm

Customer reviews : 4.5 out of 5 stars, 13 ratings

Paperback £9.95. Kindle Edition £3.43

(No.1 of a series of 5 called 'Those Kids' which are all available if you search carefully)

'JAKE HAD BUILT HIS OWN PIRATE SHIP and tomorrow would be sailing it to a deserted island. At least he hoped it would be deserted. Not like last time, when there was a mob of kayakers having a picnic. It was only a little ship, but when you are twelve you don't need a particularly big boat. He had once been told that any sailing boat deserved to be called a ship, even just a small Optimist sailing dinghy like his.'

So begins this modern take on Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons*. It is set in the southeast of Tasmania and features a family who sail in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. They have an H28 yacht which they use regularly to explore the sheltered waterway that lies between Bruny Island and the mainland. On this occasion the destination is Snake Island, which lies just off the west coast of Bruny Island. The three children, Jake, Jess and Fin, are to be allowed to camp ashore alone, but even more excitingly Jake is going to sail himself there in the little Optimist he has just built. This will be her maiden voyage and the longest he has undertaken but happily he is being escorted by his parents on the family yacht.

Jake had decided to call himself Black Jake, Terror of the Channel but halfway across the channel he did not feel quite so brave! The boat needed baling, the spray had washed sunscreen in his eyes, his hand was cramped from gripping the tiller so tightly and his lifejacket was scratching the back of his neck. This kind of detail, which can be found throughout the book, makes it seem very realistic and familiar to anyone who sails a small boat and is still learning the ropes. They all arrive safely at Snake Island and the children's adventure begins.

Fin is mad keen on fishing so spends every moment

he can doing that. Jess is determined to map the island to practise her navigation skills and Jake plans to hunt for buried treasure. As you might expect, the storyline evolves so that the children are properly marooned without their parents to hand, and there is a grumpy adult who accuses them of things they haven't done. However, new friends are made when another family anchor their yacht nearby and the children are allowed to join the island camp.

The excitement builds when they see a stranger wandering about the island with a map and a gun. What could he be up to? Then a storm rolls in and the other parents have to find a safer anchorage quickly. No time to get the children back to the yacht.

'Of course we are all right', the children tell them, thanks to the modern wonders of VHF radio and a mobile phone. No spare battery packs though, which adds to the tension! The stranger turns out to be completely friendly and on an environmental mission to save some small birds that inhabit the island from the ravages of feral cats. The storm brings much drama to their final night on the island and Jake becomes a hero by sailing his little dinghy across to Bruny Island to fetch help for the conservationist, who has been injured.

It is a splendid story full of sailing interest and realistic excitement. The publishers quite rightly suggest the book is suitable for the age range 9-99 years. As in Ransome's books, the challenges faced by the children bring out their individual strengths and they find that together they are able to overcome them. The book is extremely well written and is enhanced by Jon Tucker's hand-drawn illustrations and maps. However, you will probably find yourself reaching for an atlas or Google maps to understand the geography and context of the story better and end up knowing more about this corner of Tasmania than you did before! *JH*

# Rallies through to Late Autumn 2021

## South Coast

Newtown Creek, June 19th, Alan Moulton

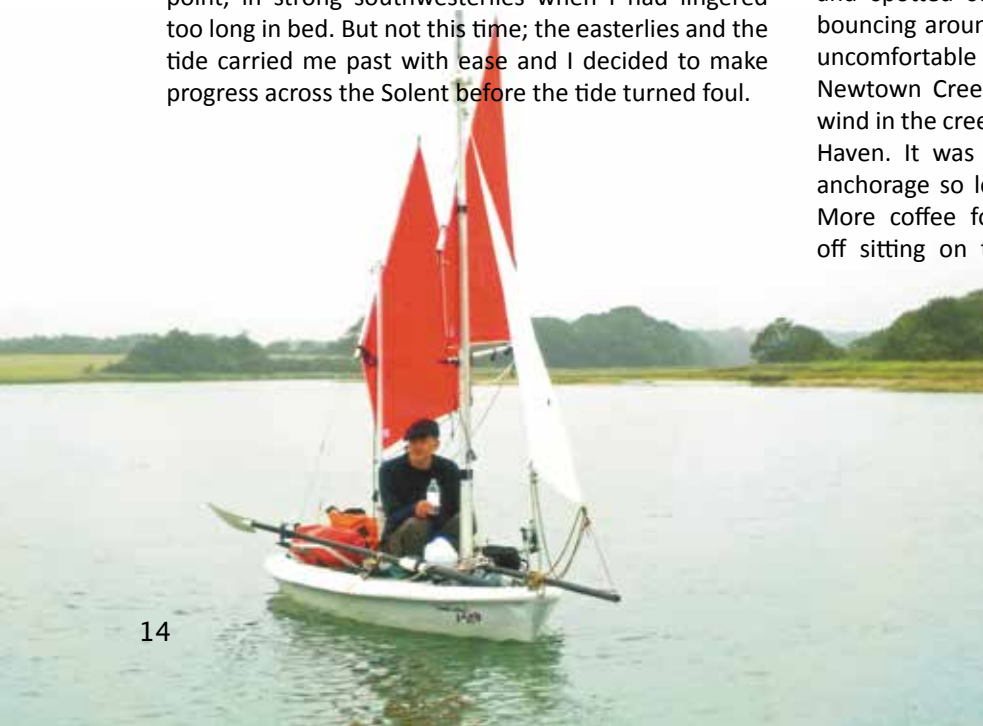
### Attenders

Steve Bradwell	Westerly Nimrod	<i>Breakaway</i>
Alan Moulton	Deben Lugger	<i>Eydis</i>
Robin Morris	Modified Laser Pico	<i>PicoMicroYacht</i>
Jill Searl & David Sumner	Shipmate	<i>Puffin</i>

I WAS AWARE THAT FOUR BOATS INCLUDING MYSELF would be setting off from various locations intending to congregate at Newtown Creek IoW throughout Saturday afternoon. My alarm clock woke me early in the morning as planned and an hour or so later I was purchasing the pass to launch at Mercury Yacht Harbour on the Hamble. It was the first time I had launched there and found it quite a relaxed location to launch. I was the only person launching at the time and the slipway is tucked away around a corner of the busy Hamble River and seems to experience little, if any, wash from passing traffic. By 0900 I was puttering South on the river, keen to make progress West of Lepe before the tide turned against me.

Robin had advised that he was intending to launch at Warsash at around 0800, so he was an hour or so ahead of me, but I was keeping an eye out for him, nonetheless. Steve was also attending; I was expecting him to launch his Enterprise from Warsash. He would be easy to spot with his pale blue sails, but he always seems to be able to get away earlier than me and I expected this occasion to be no different. As for David Sumner, all I knew was that he would be crewing for Jill Searl aboard her Shipmate, a boat that I had not seen previously.

We were blessed with light easterlies and a falling tide which made the progress out of Southampton Water into the Solent straightforward. In the past I have struggled to progress beyond Lepe, a Solent pinch-point, in strong southwesterlies when I had lingered too long in bed. But not this time; the easterlies and the tide carried me past with ease and I decided to make progress across the Solent before the tide turned foul.



Newtown Quay, High Water

Approaching Newtown, I spotted a small white trailer sailer anchored to the East of the entrance to the Creek and a very small boat with an unusual sail plan preparing to enter. I wondered if the boat lying to anchor was Jill



and David and I was certain the small boat was Robin. I decided to anchor near the gravel beach to the west of the entrance for a time and wait before entering as the tide was still falling.

I scanned the horizon whilst drinking coffee and spotted some blue sails, was that Steve? After bouncing around for a short while I decided it was too uncomfortable to linger, hoisted sail and sailed into Newtown Creek. There was very little water and less wind in the creek so soon I was sculling into the Western Haven. It was too early to explore further than our anchorage so let go the anchor and claimed my spot. More coffee followed lunch and soon I was dozing off sitting on the cockpit sole. Suddenly, Robin was alongside, having rowed around from Shalfleet, and I invited him aboard so we could introduce ourselves and



Steve Bradwell in Breakaway

chat. He described the development of his boat, which is innovative and unique and is worthy of an article to itself. (See page 69) Robin explained that he had booked into a campsite close to Shalfleet as although he uses a bivouac for overnight shelter on his boat it would not be sufficient for the wet and windy weather forecast overnight. We chatted for some time and suddenly there was Steve also, but on this occasion skippering his Westerly Nimrod. He anchored alongside and joined the conversation.

He had also launched at Mercury Yacht Harbour, but on the evening before, and had picked up a vacant mooring on the Hamble ready for an early start the following morning. His was the small trailer sailer anchored east of the entrance as I approached, and he had seen me sailing up and entering the creek. We whiled away several hours chatting and then Robin invested some time exploring the creek while Steve went looking for somewhere to go ashore and have a walk. I was content to relax in the boat having found my spot for the night.

Another hour or so and the three boats regrouped for a second time. Eventually, Robin departed to see if it was

possible to get to his campsite via the Western Haven (it was) and Steve and I made preparations for overnighing.

Just as the light was starting to fade Jill and David motored into the river in Jill's sweet-looking Shipmate trailer sailer. Brief shouted greetings were exchanged before a boom tent was erected on the Shipmate and the day came to a close. I subsequently learned that Jill and David had launched at Beaulieu but were delayed by an overheating outboard motor.

The following morning there was no need to rush; it would be several hours before the tide turned in our favour in the Solent. Steve suggested a sail over to the Beaulieu River for lunch and Robin, who had rejoined us, and I agreed. Robin left first, sailing east along the Isle of Wight shoreline waiting for the tide to turn favourable before crossing whilst Steve and I sailed an approximately straight course for the Beaulieu River entrance in light southwesterlies. We anchored near Needs Oar Point, and Robin joined us soon afterwards having taken the longer route. As we were talking and eating, one of the Beaulieu River Harbour patrol boats approached for payment of Harbour dues but offered us half price for the two bigger boats, which we gratefully accepted.

Eventually, around mid-afternoon, we all set off for the final leg to the Hamble in very light winds. Steve and I ended up motoring for a time and I saw Robin rowing. Eventually a fresh easterly breeze picked up and we enjoyed a lively final sail from the Solent to Southampton Water before preparing to motor into the Hamble. Robin was close behind us again, his boat remarkably effective under oar whenever the wind lapsed, and ready to sail in an instant when the wind allowed. Jill and David left later and made a safe passage back to Beaulieu. Despite the pub being closed, this relaxed rally had provided plenty of opportunity to socialise. **AM**



## Oxey Lake, 3rd-4th July, Alan Moulton

### Attenders:

Alan Moulton      Deben Lugger      *Eydis*  
Jill Searl & David Sumner   Shipmate      *Puffin*

**A** FORMER SALTERNS, OXEY LAKE IS A QUIET LITTLE refuge just West of Lymington River in the Western Solent and an annual destination on the South Coast rally programme. The tidal streams are strong in this area so when planning a visit to Oxey, they are a big factor.

We normally plan for this rally to coincide with a High Tide around early evening to allow our boats to dry overnight and refloat in the morning. Correspondingly, the Low Tide is around the middle of the day with the tide flowing west in the morning and reversing an hour before Low Water for the afternoon. (It does that in the Solent, and more like two hours in the Eastern Solent.)

A popular launching location for this rally is Warsash on the Hamble River but this does require an early start to take advantage of as much of the favourable tide in the morning as possible. I have found from personal experience that once the tide sets against you it is hard work beating into the prevailing wind direction with a foul tide undermining your progress. An alternative is to launch in the late afternoon ready for the tide to turn west again an hour or so before HW and plan to arrive late evening. Further options include launching at Lymington or Keyhaven, which are both situated close to the rally venue, and spend the day sailing locally, turning up refreshed and unflustered.

On this occasion, I chose to launch early at Mercury Yacht Harbour on the Hamble River. I was delayed only slightly by having to wait for two car transporter ships travelling in opposite directions to clear before crossing the shipping lane. The heavens opened while this stand-off was taking place and so I started the rally slightly frustrated and very wet. However, better was to follow.

My tidal calculations had the tide turning against me at around noon and I had progressed well past Beaulieu at this time. Also, the wind direction had more south in it than expected which meant that I was able to lay a course parallel with the New Forest Coast, staying close inshore to avoid the worst of the foul tide. Only for the final nautical mile did the wind settle into its forecast SW direction, requiring me to beat into it and I slipped cautiously into the muddy lake in time for a late lunch under sunny skies. I went ashore as



*Puffin*

soon as the rising tide allowed and whiled away what was left of the afternoon by walking along the coastal path to Keyhaven. This is a wonderful stretch of coast with Hurst Castle in the near distance and the Needles beyond. There was plenty of boating activity in this little port, with jaunty little Scows everywhere I looked.

Jill and David launched Jill's Shipmate at Bucklers Hard on the Beaulieu River, somewhat closer to our destination and choosing the alternative of a late launch, at around 5pm. After 6pm they enjoyed a favourable tide, but the southwesterlies required them to beat all the way to our overnight anchorage. Just when I thought they were not going to turn up, they appeared at the entrance to the lake and organised themselves to anchor near to where I had put myself in the deepest area of this shallow pool.

The tranquillity of this backwater was interrupted four times as loud roars erupted from somewhere nearby. It was the evening that England beat Ukraine to progress to the semi-finals. Anchor lights were set, and we settled down for the night.

The following day, the same tidal mathematics meant that there was little point in heading east until after lunch. I sailed across the Solent near to Yarmouth and then to Hurst Castle to take some photographs before turning for home, mindful of strong winds forecast for mid-afternoon. David and Jill anchored and lunched at Hurst Spit before being hit by a nasty squall. This prompted them to set off to make the return leg. Both boats enjoyed an exhilarating and rapid sail, east along the Solent. As I was approaching Calshott Spit and positioned between the shore and the shipping lane, I was also hit by a nasty squall which caused me to heave-to put in a second reef. The truth is that by the time my reef was set, and I was back under sail, the squall had blown through and disappeared.

I potted into the Hamble River under reduced sail to end the rally as I have started it...very wet. **AM**



*Eydis*

## Bembridge Rally, July 17-18, Joe Murphy

### Attenders:

Steve Bradwell	Enterprise, unnamed
Hugh Follet	14ft 6ins Lune Pilot, <i>Eildon Helen</i>
Stuart & Joe Dethick	12ft 6ins Lune Pilot unnamed
Vince Powell	Swallow Storm, <i>Llong Taid</i>
Joe Murphy	Wanderer, <i>Dulcie</i>
Chris Harnan	Koulmig 23, <i>Skylar</i>
David Sumner & Jill Searl	Mirror gaffer, <i>Curlew</i>
Alg & Lesley Bennett	Trimaran, Adventure 600

WITH EIGHT MILES OF OPEN WATER AND A shipping lane to negotiate, a passage to pretty Bembridge harbour is just big enough to feel like a mini-adventure.

Four experienced sailors who had not previously attended a DCA rally joined the South region's annual gathering at the Isle of Wight haven on a weekend of intensely hot sunshine and breezes that varied from gentle to zero.

Saturday started with a zesty F4 from the northeast that raised hopes of a brisk sail, but it soon faded to F2.

Launching from Itchenor at 0930, seasoned Solent sailor Steve Bradwell reported he had never seen the popular hard as crowded. 'It was manic at times,' he said.

The forecast of a blisteringly hot weekend had drawn boaties of every description and the car park was two-thirds full by 08.15. Steve made steady progress with the following wind until reaching the shipping lane around noon when there was a wind shift to the south which gave him a faster close-hauled beat to Priory Bay, just west of Bembridge, where he chilled out.

Stuart and Joe Dethick, who trailed their Lune Pilot all the way from Newark, Notts, also set off from Itchenor, as did Vince Powell, in his handsome Swallow, all making good time.

Hoisting sails at Cobnor at 10.30, I put in a reef optimistically, only to shake it out within a few hundred yards. Off East Head I met Hugh Follett, who had launched his early-build Lune Pilot at drying Mengeham Rythe two hours earlier, and we left Chichester Harbour on the last of the ebb. The breeze shifted to a light F2 from the South that gave us a pleasant beat to Horse Elbow, but then it faded as we tacked south over the shipping lane, slowing progress to a crawl against the flood tide.

Chris Harnan, an experienced cruising yachtsman who is close to completing a home-built Francois Vivier-designed Ebihen 16 dinghy, joined the rally in a very different vessel that also came from Vivier's drawing board. Skylar, a polished 23-ft motor launch, was hand-built by Chris who motored over from Chichester Marina. To the delight of other rally-goers, he opened up the on-board fridge which was crammed with beers.

Five dinghies camped on the sandy beach at Bembridge. Potential visitors will be interested to know that the beach cafe has changed hands and been modernised. It opens from 11am until people go home and a Westerly sailor assured us his crab salad was excellent.

The Pilot Boat Inn (which is actually shaped like a boat) has also changed, having had an extensive refurbishment during lockdown. Most excitingly it now contains the Wight Knuckle micro-brewery, housed in old store rooms, which claims to be the first craft brewery

*The fleet at rest, by Steve Bradwell. Others by Joe Murphy*





Steve Bradwell almost becalmed in his Enterprise (*right and below*)

on the island. We sampled the India Pale Ale made by owner George Bristow and his sons Fergus and Edward and pronounced it to be delicious. Joy and I stayed a couple of nights at the inn last summer and found the newly-revamped rooms very comfortable.

We sat outside and ate burgers from the barbecue until it began to get dark, enjoying a rest from the dazzling sun. Camping in an open boat has never felt as comfortable as when I crawled gratefully into my tent, which probably had something to do with the heat and the IPA.

Morning brought a scorching sun but no signs of a breeze. Stuart and son Joe departed at 07.30, wanting to be sure of making the crossing without having to rely on their Mariner 2hp outboard, which had been playing up. Joe, a tree surgeon, declared the old two-stroke was not much different to a chainsaw and did some fettling on the beach. His surgery was a success and the engine performed flawlessly, saving the pair a lot of rowing on what turned out to be the hottest day of the year so far.

Steve left at 09.00, tacking out of the harbour on a faint zephyr as far as St Helen's Fort where it died. He then had to row for an hour to the ship anchorage. Hugh and Vince left at the same time and made use of their engines to make progress.

Finding myself becalmed at the fort, I motored up to have a close look at one of the most striking vessels at anchor, a superyacht, *Le Grand Bleu*, once owned by Chelsea FC owner Roman Abramovich. What caught my eye about this extraordinary temple to excess, was the 73-ft cruising yacht perched incongruously on the port side deck, in case the oligarch owner wants to go sailing. If the wind does not serve him, not to worry – because a 68-ft 'gin palace' motor cruiser was sitting ready on the starboard deck! I could see no sign of a crane, and was mystified how these giant toys could be launched.



Legend has it that *Le Grand Bleu*, whose ludicrous 5,500 tonnes bulk is pushed along by two engines each of 9,730 BHP, was lost by Abramovich in a bet to current owner Eugene Shvidler.

Abramovich must have saved himself a fortune. The boat had not moved since I last glimpsed it during the Round the Island Race a fortnight earlier and the only signs of life were two crew members who glowered at me for taking pictures.

Would I care to swap my 14-ft dinghy for that 370-ft long monster? Another motionless hour staring at the glassy, windless sea, I might well have been tempted. But then a gentle SSE breeze rippled the surface and Steve and I had a comfortable broad reach back to Chichester, arriving at the harbour mouth goosewinged at around 13.30.

At the harbour there was a lively onshore breeze and East Head was a pandemonium of boats and swimmers under a Riviera sky. Hugh was jilling around for the fun of it. To our joy, we were hailed by Chris who was moored in *Skylar* by the beach and whose commodious fridge discharged more ice-cold beers.

Two of the DCA boats that set off on Saturday had to turn back after being becalmed. David and Jill, in *Curlew*, accepted a tow from a passing yacht back to Cobnor but were afloat again on Sunday for a day sail. Alg and Lesley had hoped to make it from Calshot to Bembridge and back in the same day but, apart from one brief canter at 10-knots between Southsea and Ryde, found the going too slow to meet the schedule and sensibly turned back. 'However, we had a fantastic day lounging in the sun!' he reported later.

Which is a good epitaph for a glorious weekend that left everyone in a better mood for Monday morning. *JM*

Ashlett Creek, Sat 31st JULY – Wed 4th August,  
David Sumner

Steve Bradwell – Enterprise  
David Sumner – gaff-rigged Mirror

Ashlett Creek nestles behind the Esso tanker terminal and the oil refinery. It is, however, amazingly pretty, has a pub, slipway and parking and is a perfect DCA venue. We can tie up at the sailing club pontoon if there is space, but we must remember that depths are not very great. It has a double high water, but we must depart by the second, and I did find even that was touch and go.

Steve and I launched at Warsash, and Steve waited for me by the spit near the Training Centre. The wind was strong, with Bramble Met giving 20 knots from SW and continuous. I had difficulty getting my sails to set correctly due to the limited sea room and, as the wind was on the nose, decided to motor sail. Steve's Enterprise sailed efficiently to windward and he soon left me. At Hamble Spit a racing dinghy came down Southampton Water at high speed and instantaneously flipped head over heels. The man was struggling to right it, but when I asked him he declined help. Not sure what I could do in the heavy conditions, apart from picking up the sailor.

The conditions were lively but manageable, and I was soon approaching the Esso terminal when a small tanker came out from behind the jetty! New experience. Then found the way into Ashlett very easily as it is marked, and to my joy saw Steve at the pontoon, which was empty. We had a pleasant evening and enjoyed a meal at the pub. Next morning we just escaped with minimum depth and sailed South in gentle winds. Steve



went across to East Cowes, where he has found a good beach for a stop. He then returned to Warsash.

I continued to Newtown and explored Clamerkin Lake. Heavy cu-nimb was building up and I eventually anchored to wait out the weather. I put up the simple mast dodger and sat behind it whilst the heavens opened for an hour. I just had to sit and take it. Then I continued to Yarmouth in slightly better conditions when the tide allowed. I asked the berthing master if I could go on the Sand Hard Pontoon, which was fine, and got the water taxi into the town for a meal.

Next morning was good weather and I went over to Hurst Point and anchored for lunch, the Fisherman holding well on the shingle. Then I went along to Lymington and went up the river to the Town Quay – a tricky river first time. The berthing master was there and I had no problem getting a berth and had a look round the town.

Next morning I went to Cowes (during Cowes Week!) and up to the Folly. I called the berthing master on VHF and he put me on a pontoon which I thought had shore

access, but it did not and I had to use the water taxi for 5 metres! No charge however. The beach seemed too muddy for a tired sailor this time but I did find a good place with a hard bottom slightly further towards Island Harbour.

Next day I had a gentle crossing back to the Hamble, straight across the Bramble Bank.

Unfortunately there was a lot of motor sailing this trip, but the Mirror was excellent and allowed access to shallows, provided comfort at night and stood up to strong winds. *DS*

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(Top) Ashlett Sailing Club, pontoon and clubhouse

(Left) David in Southampton Water

Both by Steve Bradwell



**Cobnor Fortnight – 14 to 30 August 2021**

**by Elizabeth Baker**

We had good weather this year, with mostly light winds, although they were persistently NE for the entire fortnight, which made beating back against the tide a worry, especially in the second week when HW was around midday. The first week we had sunshine interspersed with periods of rain, but the second week was mostly warm and sunny.

Forty-six people came for periods from a couple of days to the entire fortnight, and we were pleased to welcome several new members, and a few who had been members for some years, but for whom this was their first rally. Forty-one adults attended, five children, and four dogs. We also had several dinghies which had just been built by their owners, including two Morbic 12s, one by Graham Neil and the other by Peter Taylor.



John Lidstone and his outrigger canoe (Liz Baker)



Barbecue – Cliff, Roger Bamford, Alastair, David Sumner, Gill Searle and Graham Deans (Liz Baker)

it to complete the Hayling Challenge, finding it much easier to lower the unstayed mast to get under Hayling Bridge than that of their *Wanderer Dulcie*.

In addition to Joe and Joy, Cliff Martin was, as far as I am aware, the only other sailor to complete the Hayling Challenge in his fibreglass Mirror *Gilkicker*, completing the circuit in 6 hrs 5 mins, setting off at 5am while it was still dark, and getting back by 11.05 am.

I managed four or five sails in my *Cormorant* over the fortnight, but didn't do the Hayling Challenge. One day, with a brisk F4 and a single reef, I was entering Thorney Channel when I noticed Roger Hayle's *Kittiwake* (not DCA but a Cobnor berth-holder) approaching from astern, fully rigged with mainsail, two foresails and topsail. They were astonished they couldn't catch me up, as beating with my small single reefed mainsail I left them well astern.

Richard Rooth had also built a new boat, *Winoote*, a lovely double-ended Selway Fisher canoe yawl, but he broke his mast. . . again! This time it hit an overhanging tree as he was towing the boat back to the camp field.

Joe and Joy Murphy turned-up with *Daisy Jane*, a 'new' to them 15ft classless GRP boat possibly modelled on a Devon fishing boat, with a balanced lug rig. After a bit of help from Tom Edom and Chris Waite to sort out rigging, they got on so well with it that they even used



(Above) Chris Hodge sailing his *Weta* trimaran  
(Left) Cliff returns to Cobnor as Joe and Joy set off in *Dulcie* (Liz Baker)





Graham Neil sailing his Morbic 12 (Liz Baker)

Graham Deans organised a couple of barbecues, but didn't erect his marquee this year. Holding a barbecue is a good way of getting campers together for a chat. Graham Neil also lit a fire in his fire bowl most evenings, providing another focus for members to gather and converse.

We sailed up to Fishbourne, where we anchored and ate our sandwiches. He really enjoyed himself and decided that if this was what dinghy cruising was all about, he definitely wanted to be involved.



Rick and David Cullingford sailing *Yellow Peril* on a murky day (Liz Baker)



Jo, Joe and friend in *Daisy Jane* (Liz Baker)

One new family who had recently joined the DCA but who didn't own a boat and didn't even know how to sail, had come to get an idea of what the DCA was all about. I offered to take David Ritchie out and give him a sailing lesson, explaining the sailing terminology and teaching him to beat to windward.

He did very well for a first-timer and wanted advice on what sort of boat to look for. I recommended that he should first learn to sail, either at a sailing club or with the RYA, and after some thought, because he is a heavy bloke, suggested a Drascombe Dabber, because it is a sturdy boat for a heavy and inexperienced sailor. I was interested to hear that several others had made the same suggestion. So, all in all, a rally thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. Thank you all for coming and I hope to see you again next year. The dates booked are Saturday 20th August to Sunday 5th September 2022. **EB**

(Below) Richard Rooth sailing his SF Canoe Yawl (Left below) Chris Peacock's *Amazing Grace* (Liz Baker)



Robin in PicoMicroYacht



**Beaulieu River 4th / 5th September, Ian Barrett**

**Attenders:**

- Cliff Martin – Mirror *Gilkicker*
- Steve Bradwell – Enterprise
- Robin Morris – Pico *PicoMicroYacht*
- Ian Barrett – Sport 14

(Photos by Ian & Steve)

**L**IGHT EASTERLY WINDS PROPELLED FOUR BOATS and four sailors towards one of the more scenic rivers that join the Solent, with two coming from the east and two from the north. The Solent was busy with its usual menagerie of commercial shipping for Southampton and Portsmouth, racing yachts off Cowes and diesel-guzzling powerboats in a desperate hurry to stretch their legs on possibly the last weekend of summer.

I set off from Tudor SC in Langstone Harbour, keen to catch the west-flowing ebb and made very quick progress to Cowes close inshore with a good 10 knots of wind pushing me along. At the Gurnard North cardinal I adjusted course for Lepe beach and half an hour later was sitting on the beach with a coffee from the Lookout café.

Meanwhile, Steve and Robin had set off from Warsash and having departed Lepe I encountered Steve on his approach to Beaulieu, running before the wind straight into the river mouth where we encountered a rally of some sorts taking place with numerous yachts anchored around the Thames sailing barge *Alice*. We sailed on to the Beaulieu River sailing club pontoon / quay / slipway where we landed and watched as a taxi service ferried people out to *Alice* where there appeared to be a gin soaked game of sardines taking place.

Before long we sailed to the anchorage in the vicinity of post 22 where we were joined not too long later by Robin in his modified Pico. Also joining us was a pair of very inquisitive seals, who spent their time inspecting us one by one as we lazed in the sun and tried to catch

them on camera. Steve and I explored the river a little although the light winds and ebbing tide prevented my progress too far upstream and on our return to the anchorage I spotted Cliff sailing gently upstream. Cliff had set off from Emsworth and experienced light winds all the way in his Mirror but made good use of the tides.



Ian meets seal...

With an important meeting on Monday morning for which I could not be late, I took the decision to start my return journey on the Saturday evening and sailed into a gentle headwind crossing to Cowes. At this point the tidal assistance really kicked in and I started to make good progress, tacking in and out of the deep water channel between departing cruise ships.

As the wind built I pulled in a reef between Ryde and Gilkicker point where the wind had built to a steady force 4 giving me the choice of reaching off to Wootton for the night as originally planned. I chose to press on in the dark, making landfall at Tudor SC around 22.00.

Robin also assessed the forecast for Sunday and decided to make his return trip on the Saturday with sail, oar and tide assisting his passage to Warsash. Steve and Cliff sailed home on the Sunday, both enjoying long and varied passages, Steve visiting Kings Quay Creek before Wootton Creek where he paused at the Sloop Inn for a pint. The failing winds that I had feared then took hold of Steve and some rowing was required to complete his crossing to Warsash. Cliff made good progress with the tide before anchoring off Southsea in very light winds then subsequently returning to Emsworth by 21.00 via Langstone Harbour and the Hayling bridge. *IB*

Cliff in Gilkicker



Seal leaves, passing Steve....



## Introduction by Alan Moulton, Regional Secretary for the South Coast

Despite the continuing but variable threat of Covid-19, we have managed to conduct a busy summer of camping rallies, more or less as planned. For various reasons though, it became clear that attendance at the scheduled Keyhaven rally was going to be very limited as only two skippers were intent on sailing.

In the event, both of them adapted to the conditions of the day and made impressive individual daysails on the Saturday. Barclay with his son Guy achieved the significant milestone of their first return trip to the Isle of Wight in their Heron. Ian sailed 24NM from his sailing club in Langstone Harbour to Keyhaven in the morning and remarkably completed the return journey upwind in the afternoon. Both are significant achievements, and their stories are told below. *AM*

### Keyhaven River, 18 September, Barclay Martin

The original plan was to launch from Calshot and wave to any members we saw on their way to Keyhaven. As Guy (my 8-year-old son) and I have only sailed in sheltered waters and are not set up for camping on the boat yet, we felt this rally was too far for us to complete in one day. After getting some advice from Cliff Martin about alternative launch sites, we decided to launch from Lymington and make it to Keyhaven.

We left Lymington slipway just after noon with the flood and made our way past the breakers in brilliant sunshine. The wind was F2-3 from the SW and we were making good progress tacking between the many boats that were out. We noticed the ferry going to Yarmouth, and feeling confident in the sunshine decided to go for it.

With Guy up front working the jib and me doing the tiller and mainsheet, we changed course. About halfway across we caught a lot of spray which Guy manfully took in the face; we were also taking a fair amount through the centreboard case (a job for winter to cap it off).

As we approached Yarmouth our next decision was where to land. We thought left of the pier looked the safest bet. Once we landed, we set to work baling out the water. Once that was done, we had our lunch – sandwiches for Guy, beer for me. We had anchored in front of the Royal Solent Yacht club and a few people asked about the boat. It's a bit of a mongrel as it's a Heron with Mirror sails and spars which is a little confusing to people. We left Yarmouth at 15.47 just as the wind dropped off and had a gentle sail back in the sunshine arriving at Lymington slipway at 17.26. It was a shame we didn't get to Keyhaven but that will have to wait for another time.

*BM*

*\* Yes, you're right – Guy did name the boat. He has already thought of a name for the new boat we are building.*

*Barclay*



With sandwich in hand, Guy presents their boat to camera: *Sea Tiger* is a Heron with Mirror sails. Nice combination, and obviously fitted out beautifully. (Who thought of the name?\*)



All photographs taken on August 16th at Cobnor this year



**Keyhaven River, 18 September,  
Ian Barrett #3468**

I launched at Tudor SC in Langstone Harbour where I keep my boat. We have an all-tide slipway, which is very helpful. I had intended to tow the boat to the Hamble to launch but the easterly winds meant I didn't really need to.

I departed the SC at 08.25 in a force 2-3 from the east, allowing me to reach down the harbour against the flood, then turning for the main channel of the submarine barrier as I exited the harbour. With gentle winds I decided to hoist the asymmetric spinnaker on my Sport 14 with a broad reach to the barrier making for excellent sailing in the morning sunshine.

Once through the barrier I gybed and set course for Gilkicker Point where I joined with the various yachts motorsailing out of Portsmouth Harbour and gybed again for a long broad reach to Cowes. The tidal assistance by now was making for very good speeds over the ground, making East Cowes at 10.30. Once in the Western Solent the angles became tighter and to avoid any potential trouble I dropped the asymmetric and reached for Hurst Castle, which by now was just visible. I stuck with the deep water and got the full tidal assistance until just shy of Lymington where I headed for Keyhaven entrance to ensure I didn't disappear through Hurst narrows. I tacked into the river, past a couple of anchored boats, before anchoring on the shingle bank at 1230.

Keyhaven (*below*) is a remarkable place, a calm river setting surrounded by shingle and sitting under the watchful eye of Hurst Castle and Hurst Point lighthouse (*above right*). The tide was still racing out and I watched with some respect as a number of yachts sailed east, not making any ground but not giving in to the temptation of their engines.

Aware that there was unlikely to be anyone joining me I ate my lunch, and at 13.30 I started back up the Solent, hoping to make Cowes or maybe Wootton in the



failing wind. Setting off at 13.30, I took the inshore course, staying close in to Lymington to avoid the last of the ebb. I enjoyed a number of encounters with other boats doing similar, including a beautiful wooden dayboat which was managing a much better angle to the wind, which by now was coming back towards the east having had a southerly element previously. I must have just missed Barclay as I passed Lymington around 2.30pm, although I was sticking fairly close to the shore to stay out of the tide.

By Gurnard the tide was working well for me and the wind strengthened considerably, requiring a reef in the mainsail. There is something very enjoyable about making progress upwind whilst heaving-to and I must have made a couple of hundred metres in the time it took me to reef.

Now under full control once more I resumed my beat, tacking back and forth across the main channel past Ryde Middle until I tacked onto a course for Gilkicker Point. By now the wind had abated and I shook out the reef. There was very little traffic in the deep water although a number of other boats were doing the same as me.

My final leg on port tack took me to a position just west of the Ryde Sands marker post where I tacked for the last time, able to make the main channel of the submarine barrier, and then just managed to squeak round the Langstone entrance port marker post in what was by now a very light breeze.

I reached gently up the harbour as the light faded, touching down on the slipway just after 19.30; alone, as I had been when I launched. *IB*



Developed from a South Coast rally photograph by Alan Moulton

## South Coast Winter Programme 2021-2022

All tides Chichester GMT, except those in March which are Portsmouth GMT. For further details and updates see the South Region's Rallies section of the DCA Forum

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### November 6th

Launch Itchenor for Bosham & Dell Quay.

HW 11.55 5.2m

Host Alan Moulton 07818 086051

alan.moulton@btconnect.com

### November 20th

Launch Emsworth for Fowley Island and Langstone

HW 11.51 4.7m

Hosts Cliff Martin & Sarah Sorensen 07934 047352

dreamingdotcom@googlemail.com

### December 11th

Launch Itchenor for East Head, Sandy Point or Pilsey Island

HW 17.11 4.1m

Host Steve Bradwell 07598 388339

stevebradwell@btinternet.com

### December 27th (Monday)

HW 17.18 4.1m

Post Christmas Daysail, from Itchenor

Host TBA

Autumn 2021

### January 22nd

Launch Hardway (Portsmouth Harbour) for Fareham / Portchester

HW 14.08 4.5m

Host Barclay Martin 07743 055773

barclaym31@hotmail.com

### February 12th

Launch Eling (Southampton Water) for Calshot Spit

HW 08.32 3.9m

Host TBA

### February 19th

South Coast Winter Social Meeting. The Crown, Emsworth from 6pm. (The DCA AGM starts at 10.00 via Zoom, with Michael Storer's talk following at 11.30. No clash with an evening fixture.)

### March 5th

Launch Warsash for Upper Hamble Daysail

HW 13.10 4.7m

Host Alan Moulton 07818 086051

alan.moulton@btconnect.com

### March 19th

Launch Bedhampton Quay for Langstone Harbour Daysail

HW 12.06

Host Alan Moulton 07818 086051

alan.moulton@btconnect.com



# Keith Holdsworth

## Member 2125

25.02.1943 – 06.09.2021

### On September 13th 2021, Liz Baker posted:

It's a long time since Keith Holdsworth attended a rally. I wonder how many of you remember him and his little boat, *The Flying Pig*, with its folding bilge keels, permanent mattress on the floor and polytarp sails. Many of the current members won't even have met him, but for those who have, the sad news is that he died last week.

### David Sumner replied to Liz's post on the Forum:

Thank you for telling us about Keith. I have not seen him for years, yet we were good friends when he was sailing. I met him first at Pitts Deep, when we arrived in dodgy weather, and no-one else showed up. We had a glorious steak and chips at the local pub and chatted about sailing at great length. I have often wondered how he was doing and I am very sad to hear the news.

*(The funeral was on Tuesday 21 September 2021, at Long Barrow Ceremony Hall, Harbour View Crematorium, Randalls Hill, Lytchett Minster, Dorset.)*

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Keith left the DCA on May 20th, 2016. He had not been active for a while and I seem to recall that he felt he was no longer enthusiastic enough. He lived in Ringwood, Hants., and he had a great address for a sailor: 59 Kingfisher Way. I remember him being droll and entertaining with clear opinions about what made a suitable boat for cruising. I searched the records and found an excellent example: Keith's report on a rally he 'hosted' in 2008, at Hurst Point. A rally that mostly escaped from him, especially at the end when he fled from a thunderstorm under power.

The photographs that follow this all come from Dick Houghton, I think. Straight away I found the one of Keith with Len and Ed Wingfield at the 2005 anniversary celebration at Cobnor, taken by Dick, who was involved with producing the bulletin in those days and toured the camp field and the water with his camera. This jpeg image was lying on the desktop screen of my computer; no idea how it got there.

I tried in vain to find an article written by him on how he created his highly individual dinghy.

He is listed in 'past members' as sailing a GP14. I believe he carved that up and modified it. If any member can find an article on his building activities, in the journal or in Solent Soundings, please let me know. The *Pig* does of course appear in Roger's book, too. On page 214, opposite my just-sold Cruz. —Ed

### Hurst Point, Keyhaven, 30-31 August 2008, Keith Holdsworth, Bulletin 201

#### Attending

Keith Holdsworth	Own design, <i>The Flying Pig</i>
Liz Baker	Cormorant, <i>Tessa</i>
Geoff Aston	Foreland dinghy
Len Wingfield	Gull
Phil Oxborrow	Wayfarer
Steve Bradwell	Enterprise

---

**T**HE PRINCIPAL TASK OF A RALLY HOST IS TO turn up at the right place and on the right day.

Notoriously, I fell at this hurdle on a previous occasion and spent a lonely weekend afloat as a consequence. Scarred by my earlier experience and suspicious at receiving no telephone enquiries in the week preceding the August Bank Holiday, I took the trouble to check the date and found to my chagrin that someone was hosting the rally somewhere else that weekend! My rally was the last weekend in August, which I had wrongly assumed was, by tradition, the Bank Holiday weekend.

Despite having the benefit of an extra week to prepare for the rally, I then went on to forget the second fundamental requirement, my buoyancy jacket. How naked does that make you feel? So I resolved to avoid the high seas and confine my sailing to the river channel.

Launching at busy Keyhaven Harbour was uneventful, apart from becoming the centre of a dispute between the two River Wardens as to whether or not I could leave the trailer on the quay, which was fortunately resolved in my favour.

At the harbour I met Phil Oxborrow who reported that he had earlier encountered Len Wingfield and helped with running repairs to his rudder. Phil and I sailed downriver towards the rally venue together – well, 'together' for the brief moment of time that it took him to overtake me. By the time I had tacked my way to the destination, Phil had disappeared into the Solent and I was faced with a deserted rally venue; that is, apart from a thousand Optimists and their young owners, shepherded by a few anxious parents. I found the one quiet patch amongst them and settled down for a cup of tea with paté and cucumber sandwiches.

The quiet quickly evaporated as the raucous novice sailors soon came surging out of control around me. That I could put up with. What I couldn't put up with was the constant and profuse apologies from the shepherds, which demanded repeated interruptions to

my munching to graciously acknowledge.

Munching finally over, I decided to head off on foot in search of the missing DCA rally and soon found Liz and Geoff not 200 yards away, around the corner of a shingle bank. They were obviously prepared to tolerate the disturbance of the main shipping channel in preference to running the gauntlet of the Optimists.

During the course of a brilliant late summer afternoon we were joined by Phil, Len and Steve, then later by Phil's family who had been bravely walking the coast path accompanied by dog Gem. During a quintessential DCA rally, an uncharacteristically uninhibited group of DCA members engaged in swimming, mud-sliding, practice capsizes and ill-fitting spinnaker trials, before winding up in the evening with a beach barbecue.

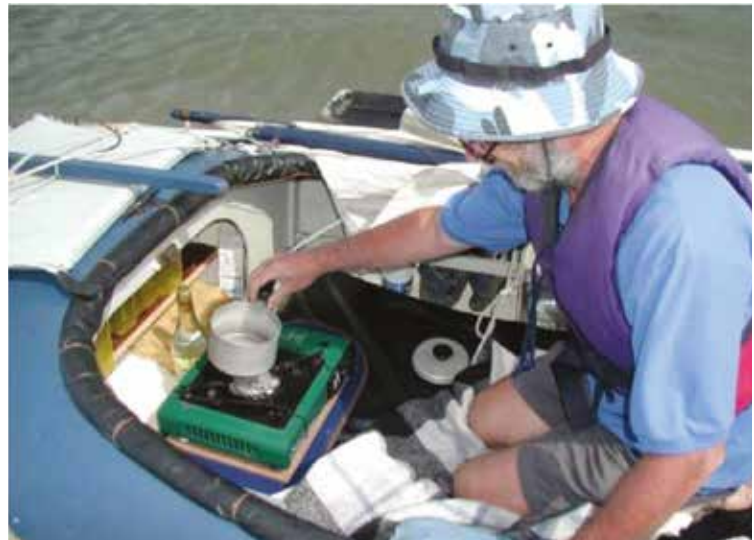
A calm and quiet night was brought to a shuddering conclusion in the early hours by the rude intervention of the Needles lighthouse foghorn. The local weather forecast at 8 o'clock brought more bad news. A line of thunderstorms was approaching our southern counties from France. The sky already looked threatening and yours truly decided to make a run for it before the world came to an end.

So, swathed in a rubber air bed, I hared off back to the harbour under full auxiliary power as the first drops of rain began to fall. The braver souls that I left behind, who were seemingly impervious to rain, proceeded to make the best of the delinquent Sunday weather in their own various ways. *Keith Holdsworth*

*(Now turn to the next pages for more...)*



*(Above, left to right) Keith Holdsworth, Len Wingfield and Ed Wingfield at Cobnor in 2005 for the anniversary bash. This obviously preceded the meal as the cutlery is undisturbed, but there is a heart-warming selection of wine bottles, beer cans and Coca-Cola cartons, plus DCA commemorative mugs. Other shots on this page show Keith in *The Flying Pig*, possibly with pâté and cucumber sandwiches in play – and tea, as in bottom right...  
All photographs by Dick Houghton (?)*



# Remembering Keith Holdsworth

IN HIS POPULAR BOOK, *The Dinghy Cruising Companion*, Roger Barnes writes, under the heading of 'The Floating Sofa',

"Keith Holdsworth sails the sheltered waters of the south coast of England in a boat that is basically a floating double bed. The whole inside of *The Flying Pig* is a mattress, with a padded backrest all round the edge of the well. Keith sails the boat while lying on the bed, lounging against the backrest. *The Flying Pig* is not a boat for crossing oceans in, nor does she have any great turn of speed. She is simply designed for comfortable cruising in the creeks of his local coastline. Keith is a wise and extremely comfy man." *DCC pp.214-5*

All of that is true, though it does not encompass the full originality of the man, who reminded us constantly by his example that the DCA offers a home for all light craft cruising sailors without being at all prescriptive about them or their vessels. The other unspoken thread woven continually through his contributions to the DCA was that our rallies are 'non-rallies' — if your idea of them is a gaggle of boats following a leader and sticking rigidly to a 'cunning plan'.

Above all, his gentle, lively, self-mocking style made his reports a pleasure to read. It is a long time since he retired from the DCA, but he is as much a serious loss to us now as he was then; each of his contributions is a cameo to be savoured. Two more are offered below.

*Keith Muscott*

## DC209, p23, Oxey Lake – Lymington, 21-22 August, Keith Holdsworth

### Attended:

Keith Holdsworth – arrived on foot  
Steve Bradwell & Len Wingfield,  
Westerly Nimrod *Breakaway*  
(attempted but only got to Newtown)

I had been transported into the opening scene of *Great Expectations*. As I groped my way across Pennington Marsh the ghostly shapes of cows and bedraggled walkers in rain capes lumbered out of the mist at me.

The steady warm rain of the past few days now had an edge to it and was being blown horizontally in the squalls, stinging the face and saturating the beard. The anchorage at Oxey Lake was deserted and desolate. The only moving thing was the slow cumbersome outline of the Lymington Ferry sliding silently through ragged clouds across the background of a Turner painting.

Only the crazies and basket cases of the DCA would launch on a day like this. A reconnoitre of the Chequers Inn revealed no signs of DCA through steamed-up glasses and the amber of my pint of Ringwood Best. I went back home to enjoy a comfortable night.

At 9pm the telephone rang.

From Liz Baker:

Keith sadly died at the beginning of September. Not many current rally attenders will have met him as he disappeared from regular south coast rally attendance many years ago. He started in the DCA with a much modified GP14. I can't now recall in what way it was modified, but it possibly had a yawl rig and a cuddy. He then designed and built *The Flying Pig*. He had said that if this boat ever got finished, pigs would fly; hence the name.

Keith was a keen ditch-crawler and preferred the inland creeks and rivers to long passages on the open sea, so he designed his boat with this sort of sailing in mind. It was small, about 11ft; and light, so it could be lifted if he happened to go aground. He had a permanent mattress on the floor so he could sit there comfortably for cooking or sailing, and the boat was well organised for cooking, etc. It was presumably waterproof so it could easily be wiped dry after water landed on it. It was a neat little boat. He had a yawl rig made out of polytarp, and hinged bilge keels which folded up when the boat was aground, but dropped down when sailing to provide lateral resistance. He had no centreboard because he wanted plenty of room for sleeping.

Keith was also a keen walker, and often moored his boat while he went for long walks. Possibly this is why he stopped sailing, as his preference for walking overcame his preference for sailing.

I received the news of his death by email from his ex-wife Diana, who said he was found by his son Oliver. Presumably a non-sailor, she found my address by perusing the DCA website, and said that although they were divorced, she knew how much he had enjoyed being a member of the association. *Liz Baker*

It was Steve Bradwell who, with Len Wingfield as crew in the Nimrod, had battled their way from Warsash as far as Newtown Creek.

No, I told them, they were not missing any fun at Oxey Lake and they should turn round and go back home.

The crazies and basket cases of the DCA live on. *KH*

*Len wrote afterwards:*

*'Saturday was very rough, so I crewed for Steve in his Nimrod. Had a hard time getting to Oxey Lake. Never been so soaked from spray. We just made it to Newtown before the flood became too strong to make progress.*

*Intended to sail on with next ebb, but by then it was not only dark but foggy and we were concerned about getting away from Oxey before the forecast strong winds materialised, so we stayed.*

*Actually Sunday weather was light!'*

(Right) Alastair Law and Mark Tinker, checking out Mark's Hobie 16 and his camping arrangements on it  
(Bottom) Keith H sheltering from the weather at Christchurch, in *The Flying Pig*.  
— Both images are from *Solent Soundings*.

Keith Holdsworth feigned astonishment when he considered other members' boats in his reports, as though his *Flying Pig* was the epitome of normal design and other sailors ought not to be able to resist its charms and comforts. He found it painful to imagine Mark sleeping in a tent on his cat, or Alastair imprisoned in his Paradox, or – but the list was long... –Ed



### DC177 / 2002 Christchurch — 3/4 August

The August Rally at Christchurch Harbour in many ways encapsulated the variety of experience that is dinghy cruising. The weather fluctuated between baking sunshine with breathless calm, dramatic sunsets, lowering skies, thunderstorms, blustery showers and winds from everywhere but in the direction of travel.

On a sparkling Friday evening, Mudeford Quay was lively with tourists, fisherman and dinghies as I launched my floating yawl-rigged bed, *The Flying Pig*. Having avoided the traditional *faux pas* in front of a critical audience, a light wind spirited me across the harbour to the shelter and tranquillity of Hengistbury Head. A full stomach, the onset of darkness and the gentle rocking of the boat brought about almost instantaneous sleep when most holidaymakers were emerging for their evening's entertainment.

Saturday dawned grey and blustery but offered a perfect opportunity to test a new jib and mizzen, fabricated from a redundant polycotton window blind. With a bit of fine tuning, the aesthetic and propulsive effects were most satisfying.

Jay Milbourne's *Star Trekker* was glimpsed through the distant greyness ploughing upriver for re-victualling after returning to his home port from one of his extended south coast summer forays. Jay's choice of dinghy is a cabin boat with sails and outboard plus every imaginable home comfort and navigational aid. It is instantly recognisable by its many flags, including a version of the Stars and Stripes, a Jolly Roger, and even Jay's own personal ensign.

With rain threatening, sail trials were declared over and I anchored near the water's edge at the end of the avenue of whimsical beach-houses that is Mudeford Spit. Jay eventually joined me, selecting his position like a cat selecting the comfiest spot on the sofa.

John Kuyser, a man seemingly with a boat for every occasion, made a flying visit in his

yellow kayak and was gone again before the familiar blue triangle marking the top of a Leader's sail began threading its way towards us through the crowded anchorage. Accompanying it was the equally familiar Len Wingfield, arriving after a frustratingly windless sail from Keyhaven. Eschewing the use of engines, Len prefers to extract nuggets of forward motion from still air like a prospector panning gold from a river bed.

The Saturday evening entertainment comprised a dash up a darkened River Stour into the noise and bright lights of an open air swing band concert, followed by a fruitless search of local hostelries for the perfect ginger beer shandy.

Sunday again dawned damp and murky, but gradually the emerging sun tempted me into the open for more sail trials and ultimately to a quiet inlet in Stanpit Marsh. Through binoculars I picked out the blue triangle wending its way out of the harbour, accompanied by the *StarTrekker* as they commenced their return journey towards Keyhaven.

Lunch was consumed peacefully afloat amongst a horde of unconcerned waders until the spell was broken by the roar of a yellow stunt biplane. With a man astride the top wing it proceeded to perform an acrobatic *tour de force* above the astonished spectators on Mudeford Quay. It was a fitting end to a weekend of contrasts. *KH*



# North West

**Derwentwater Rally Sat May 8 – Sun May 9**

**Chris Lavender**

## Attendees:

### Friday

Mike and AnneMarie Harrington (Frank and Margaret Dearden (Bill Jones, Colin Firth, Lucy Bate Colin Bell	Wanderer Torch Cat boat	<i>Arian</i> <i>Thrift</i> <i>Puffin</i>
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### Saturday

Mike Harrington and Chris Lavender (AnneMarie walking)		<i>Arian</i>
David Bone, Frank and Margaret Dearden, Cornish Coble		<i>Avocet</i>
Bill Jones, Lucy Bate & Paul Simpson		
	Post Boat	<i>Rowanne Teresa</i>
Colin Bell & Colin Firth	Cat boat	<i>Puffin</i>

### Sunday

Paul Simpson and Mike Harrington		
	Post Boat	<i>Rowanne Teresa</i>
David Bone, Frank and Margaret Dearden		
	Cornish Coble	<i>Avocet</i>
Colin Bell and Chris Lavender	Cat boat	<i>Puffin</i>
Emma Kier	Percy Blandford 10	<i>Sea Sprite</i>

*(Photographs: Chris Lavender)*

**I**N RECENT YEARS, THE DCA'S DERWENTWATER RALLY has proved to be a very popular event, usually fielding up to 10 boats and crews. This year's rally, however, was a little more subdued. Although we were warmly welcomed by the marina staff, Covid restrictions meant facilities were not fully open, and with an adverse forecast in the offing, it might have been a lot of effort for what may have proved to be a washout.

The blot on our weather landscape was the predicted heavy rain on Saturday. It was showing on the Monday and was still there on the Thursday. The cancellations began.. Conditions on the Friday however were excellent and several of the early birds set out on the water to enjoy some good sailing, have lunch and experience the beauty of Derwentwater.



The only boat out on Saturday — Mike's Wanderer, *Arian*

Last home, in easing conditions, was Mike Harrington, at 6.30. Mike's motto is, 'I'm here to sail, and sail I blooming well will!'

Saturday was, in a word, awful...

Paul Simpson and Colin Bell had both spent the night aboard their boats and woke to a miserable scene of wind and rain. After a bit of a discussion with them and the others, it was agreed we would forget the sailing for the morning and see what happened – it wasn't a hard decision. Coffee and scones seemed a much better plan, and we were just about to tell Mike, when he suddenly appeared in his drysuit ready for battle. He seemed a little disappointed but took it well and went and got changed again.



The view south...

Nichol End marina was just around the corner, and despite the Covid restrictions and the conditions, they were still as welcoming as usual, and their famous and fabulous scones were the size of house bricks!

Meanwhile the rain continued unabated and ran off the roof of the marina's gazebos in torrents. We naturally did justice to the coffee and cakes, and we had a good old catchup with members we hadn't seen in ages.

Back to base in the rain, and another chat about the day's proceedings.

Lunch at Otterfield





(Left) Colin Firth and Bill Jones in *Thrift*  
 (Below left) Colin Bell in *Puffin*  
 Both taken on Friday

But a spot of lunch first?

Once again, Mike appeared in his drysuit....

'Come on let's go!'

That was me told. So leaving the others to their lunches, we launched the *Wanderer* into a variable southerly breeze, picking our way carefully above the weed and out towards the moorings.

We made steady progress and although it was raining, at least it was warm. The surrounding fells, normally dramatic and beautifully etched, wore cloud on their shoulders, soft and fluffy hill clag, there would be no views for the walkers today.



The *Wanderer* seemed happy with one reef in and therefore so were we, as we beat back and forth heading south. By 2 o'clock the rain had stopped so we pulled into a sheltered shingle bay on Herbert Island to enjoy our sandwiches ashore.

The visibility suddenly became crystal clear, and we were alarmed to see at first glance what looked like a forest fire on the steeply wooded slopes to the east. Of course it was the mist clouds, seething between the trees

and climbing up the slopes in curling columns – it was quite a sight!

With lunch over, we set off south into now gloomy conditions. The wind had wound itself up again and the boat was rolling around over the waves in lively fashion. After a while, we noticed, somewhat unhappily, that we could no longer see the end of the lake for the rain, that there was more wind on its way, and we were at the widest and most exposed part of the lake. Mike suggested we get across, heave to, drop the main and use the wind to go back under jib.

So that's what we did. Of course the wind dropped immediately, and it brightened up, so out with the coffee then! We made it back

to the marina with the wind up and down. The others had either returned home or stayed put to wait it out. We pulled the boat out, and in the calm afternoon the marina was full of birdsong. A lovely end to the day.

Sunday was overcast but fine, with a variable breeze. By ten o'clock we were on the water and heading off, all with one reef down. First away was David Bone on *Avocet*, he took off like a race horse, with his crew, Frank and Margaret Dearden, and we didn't see them again until lunchtime.

Colin Bell kindly invited me to crew on *Puffin*, which was a delightful first for me on Colin's catboat. I have never sailed on anything so comfortable and relaxing before and I was absolutely smitten. No wonder Colin is never short of crew.

Paul Simpson took Mike Harrington as helmsman aboard his Post Boat and followed us out.

An hour and a half later, Emma Kier launched her little Percy Blandford Dinghy. Emma had rushed to finish and ready the boat for the water, so we didn't get to meet up with her until we were recovering the boats back at the marina.

Otterfield Bay is our usual lunchtime stopover. Offering shelter, an occasional lee shore, and an easy pebbled approach and landing. It also has plenty of room. This time we shared it with only one other boat – a young family on an inflatable canoe.

David and his crew had made it to the end of the lake and wondered if we had had problems as we were a little delayed. I confessed that my helmsmanship was the problem, a little too relaxed, and that Colin may have got us there quicker if I'd given him the chance.

Paul and Mike enjoyed their sailing; like me Mike was also getting to grips with the different and more traditional style of hull and sail plan of the Post Boat.

Paul continues to develop his accommodation and it now sports a newly built large and ritzy victual /galley box. Rumours of an Aga, are, I'm told, just rumours... Doesn't explain the horse brasses though, Paul!

All boats returned to base after making their own way back without any dramas. Recovery was easy with help of David's Land Rover.

Derwentwater was, as it always is, sublime and well worth the effort. **CL**

**River Dee, from Farndon to Chester,  
Sunday June 20th, Matthew Peacock #3359**

**Plan: Launch at Farndon Bridge between 10:00 – 11:00hrs  
Take out at Sandy Lane Car Park and slip (close to Chester SC)  
11 miles, ± 4 hours**

**Report: Keith Muscott**

**Attended:**

Matthew & Liz Peacock, modified 17ft CLC Northeaster Dory, *Hilda*  
Anne & Andy Rushton, Gumotex 13ft 2ins Palava kayak  
Keith Muscott & Jenny Heney, 14ft 6ins Gumotex Thaya kayak, *Zeffiretti*  
Phillip Barre and daughter Molly, 13ft 6ins Ranger open canoe  
Antony Sluce, inflatable Avon tender  
Colin Bell, 7ft Simpleton II plywood dinghy (*see end of report*)  
Aidan & Zoe Williams, separately in short solo kayaks  
Raymond & Margaret, Matthew's friends, open canoe  
Tony Nield, 14ft Leader sailing dinghy, *White Leader*  
(*Tony launched at Sandy Lane and made his way upstream to meet some of us close to Eccleston.*)



(Above) Not an exciting photograph, unless you need to park for over four hours at Sandy Lane, Chester, on a Sunday.

The grass verge seen here stretches down to Sandy Lane from the sailing club entrance (*left*). It is free to use, up to the fence, all day.

*Photograph by Matthew Peacock*

**T**HERE HAVE BEEN SOME RALLIES THIS year when a week's good weather threw in its hand at the last minute as we all got together. This Dee trip was different. There had been days on end of heavy rain, then a brief easing to raise hopes for the weekend, and finally a foul forecast for the day. Surprisingly we were not washed out, even though other regions suffered badly; we had a dry day and it became really sunny.

This one-day River Dee event has been a regular feature of the NW programme for many years. It has not always been an unqualified success, though. Finding the

**Matthew's Advice**

Please read the excellent British Canoeing Guide to River Dee-Farndon Bridge to Chester. This guide includes start directions, a good description of the journey, safety, environmental and other advice.

In addition to the safety advice in the guide, things to avoid include ingesting river water, hanging onto overhanging branches, entangling with floating trees, getting out on steep muddy banks, annoying fishermen, encountering big tourists' river cruisers below the Crook of Dee, and rowing boats with racing crews that can be distractingly clad in tight-fitting Lycra. Stay well away from the weir in Chester, which is down river from Sandy Lane.

From Farndon to the Crook of Dee (6/7 miles) the river is often completely empty of other boats, which amazes me considering how beautiful it is.

We are all responsible people and able to assess and manage risks for ourselves.

I look forward to this meeting which should be a pleasant paddle or row down this surprisingly quiet and beautiful river. *MP*

right wind to head upriver in a sailing dinghy from Sandy Lane past the sailing club can be difficult, and has led to early lunch breaks only a mile or two from base, if that. But it has always been a very sociable 'daysail'. I predict a popular future for it as a serious day's expedition if it continues in this form as a downstream run from Farndon – others could still launch from Sandy Lane and head upstream to meet the fleet if they wished, as Tony Nield did.

There were worries about car parking. I have never found Sandy Lane to be packed to capacity, but there is a four-hour limit on your stay – exactly the time you would take for a smooth trip down the eleven miles, with no latitude for error. But this problem has been eased. Jenny and I parked one car in the nearby Christleton Road car park (free on Sundays) and drove to Farndon with *Zeffy* in the boot of another. Unfortunately there are only 20 or so spaces in Christleton Road, but another quiet street nearby might have sufficed. The most certain solution is the grass verge between the road and fence stretching from the sailing club to the Sandy Lane car park, which is free to use all day (*See photo above. Thank you, Matthew, for your detailed research that threw up a number of possibilities, including this one – see the NW section on the Forum for others.*)

The long parking space at Farndon is right by the river, with a public convenience close to the entrance of it at the roadside. There are steep steps running down to the water's edge. These are narrow and had become very slippery underfoot in the the previous heavy rain. If the forecast for more rain that morning had proved correct they might have been downright dangerous while manoeuvring boats down them. However, bigger boats than *Zeffy* reached the river, so there must be easier launching points close by. We all reached the water in reasonable time, then passed under Farndon Bridge on our way: what a marvellous starting point!



(Left) Launching from the bottom of the steps at Farndon. They were covered with wet mud, and Jenny's slick rubber soles were like ice skates. She parked her paddle in the vegetation to board while Aidan held *Zeffy* steady; his own kayak is following on behind. I've boarded and got myself tangled up with the paddle leash; naughty words are being spoken.

Taken by Anne Rushton, who was already on the water in her own Gumotex kayak and probably bored with waiting...

Matthew appointed himself in *Hilda* as 'grim sweeper', to follow on behind under oars and look out for those who were in difficulty. In fact this did turn out to be a great help and solved the problems of two of our voyageurs. He also suggested the plan to lunch ashore about six miles along our track at the Crook of Dee, just before Eccleston, which was really good, just three miles from the end with everyone in good spirits.



Part of the fleet enjoying the unexpected fine weather (*J Heney*)



About to pass under Farndon Bridge after launching (*J Heney*)

upwards was slowly describing circles in the air in response to the current under the calm surface. It could have been a Sioux shaman's sky burial with his buffalo head medicine hat jammed on the end of the vertical branch. Spooky...

The flow was not fierce, though at times it was felt as a potent force helping us along. The combination of this and the number of obstacles in the water leads me to suggest that a vessel that can be propelled while facing forward is the ideal choice for an expedition like this. That means most forms of kayak and definitely traditional native Canadian-style canoes.

As Phillippe Barre remarked later, '...Like all river trips the inevitable twists and turns revealed a new horizon around every bend...'

There were plenty of twists and turns over the first half of the trip, and three big looping horseshoes before we reached Aldford Brook that are threatening to produce oxbow lakes.

We were immediately in another world. The banks are often high and forward vision is limited. To add to the drama, there were lots of fallen trees in the water, often stuck on the bottom with the current swirling round them, or free and moving downstream with us.

The biggest and most impressive stationary island of flotsam that almost blocked the river was this one (*right*), comprising one or more fallen trees and lots of vegetation dragged from the banks. The photograph cannot convey the full effect, as that branch pointing

Photograph by *J Heney*







Margaret and Raymond in the red canoe; Molly and Phillippe Barre in the blue one (taken by Anne Rushton)

The worst of these gives a new twist to the term 'death trap'. Views of them in the trees as we passed lent a darker ambience to the shady natural background.

There is something post-apocalyptic about them and we saw no sign of life in any. Apparently the 'Chalets of Farndon' date from the pre-war 'plotlander' movement, when country retreats were amateur-built on bits of land acquired by townies, or the homeless. This came to an end with the onset of WWII and later the Town and Country Planning Act. There's a rumour that one of the Farndon chalets is owned by Ricky Tomlinson – the actor and political activist.

As Matthew pointed out in his advice on the Forum, 'Inflatables may be viable if they can be rowed. Sailing boats that cannot be easily rowed or paddled could be challenging'. They are, definitely.

Our mixed collection of boats led him to allow about five hours all told for the trip. Phillip Barre again:

'The assortment of craft added to the mix, which eventually ended with *Three Men (and one woman) in a Boat*. Most of the rivers I paddle on are restricted to open canoes and kayaks whereas the trip Matthew planned for us accommodated a variety of craft, and not forgetting Winnie the dog, to prove that the DCA has a multi-species appeal.'

No boat or crew should be prevented from joining a DCA expedition, but everyone should be aware of the difficulties arising from types of craft that aren't much suited to a river. If a boat is awkward to manage, just the prospect of eleven miles will test the will to proceed.

The character of the second half of the route contrasts with the first. The urban use of the river seen in the environs of Chester reaches out to you along this artery of water in the form of increased traffic, badly navigated tourist boats of all sizes, stand-up paddle boards piloted more or less expertly by half-naked preening young men and women, and serious watersports athletes in multi-crew sculls and the like. The hazards that need to be watched carefully are no longer just the primeval ones of the empty river.

Between Farndon and the iron bridge, the banks are home to shanties and chalets in various states of disrepair, often with teetering scaffolding forming a route down to a jetty for a boat. Fifty all told, I believe.



One of the better chalets...  
by Jennifer Heney

In my brief comment on the Forum afterwards I wrote, 'The bird life was superb, my favourite being the slim and pale grey young heron that hugged the shoreline underneath the overhanging branches and remained quite close to us as we moved along. Large flocks of greylag geese appeared occasionally in the shallows. Some of the shanties on the banks suggested the ambience of the bayou, with gators silently waiting and crawdads or gumbo for supper. Very decadent in fact. I thought I could hear *Duelling Banjos* at one point... No sign of John Voigt or Burt Reynolds, though...'<sup>2</sup>

As the nature of the upper reaches was practically unknown to Jenny and I, and there were eleven miles to cover, we dug in with our paddles and reached the Crook of Dee about fifteen minutes before anyone else, which was bad form. We waited for everyone to lunch and leave before vacating the Crook ourselves to follow on fifteen minutes later. In the same Forum post as above, I added, 'I think a more leisurely approach with hands off the throttle may be in order for 2022. This should be an *African Queen* rather than a *Heart of Darkness* experience.'

The startlingly beautiful blue iron bridge onto the Duke of Westminster's estate at Eccleston marks the border between two worlds. A mile after that comes the Crook of Dee, which is easy to recognise, easy to land on, and a comfortable sandy place to take a break.

(Left) Farndon chalet, taken by Bobby Seal





(Top left) arriving at the Crook of Dee  
 (Top right) the bridge which runs on to the Duke of Westminster's estate (Middle) Relaxing on shore at the Crook of Dee  
 (Bottom) Leaving the Crook heading for Sandy Lane. Note Matthew's small convoy... (Photographs on this page taken by Jennifer Heney)

Apparently the Duke's minions can appear and attempt to evict you, but I imagine it is an infrequent irritation. We spent a sociable half hour there, a bit of group bonding as well as the chance for refreshment.

In the expectation of prolonged warm work on the paddles, I was wearing only a Helly Hansen 'Dry' vest under my kayak cagoule. I was distinctly chilly up to the lunch break at the Crook of Dee. After that the sun warmed us all.

Matthew's dory now had two oarsmen, Colin Bell and himself, and two standbys, Antony Sluce and Liz Peacock. It functioned as a tugboat, with the Simpleton II and Antony's inflatable in tow.

We set off and it was a while before we caught up with anyone. Then I spotted a familiar boat shape hauled up into the shrubbery. It was Tony Nield's *White Leader*, the replacement for his old wooden *Red Leader*, which has succumbed to rot. His latest Leader once belonged to Len Wingfield. We chatted a while before continuing.

It was very pleasant back at Sandy Lane, hauling out boats and sorting gear in the sunshine while chatting about how to organise the retrieval of cars and trailers from Farndon. There and back is about sixteen miles, so an extra period of about 45 minutes was factored in. It wasn't as bad as it sounds, and the boats were watched over while the shuttle bunnies were away.

Everything had gone better than expected. The last forecast consulted on the day suggested that there would be high cloud and light breezes, but we did better than that with little or no wind and the sun breaking through to raise the temperature.

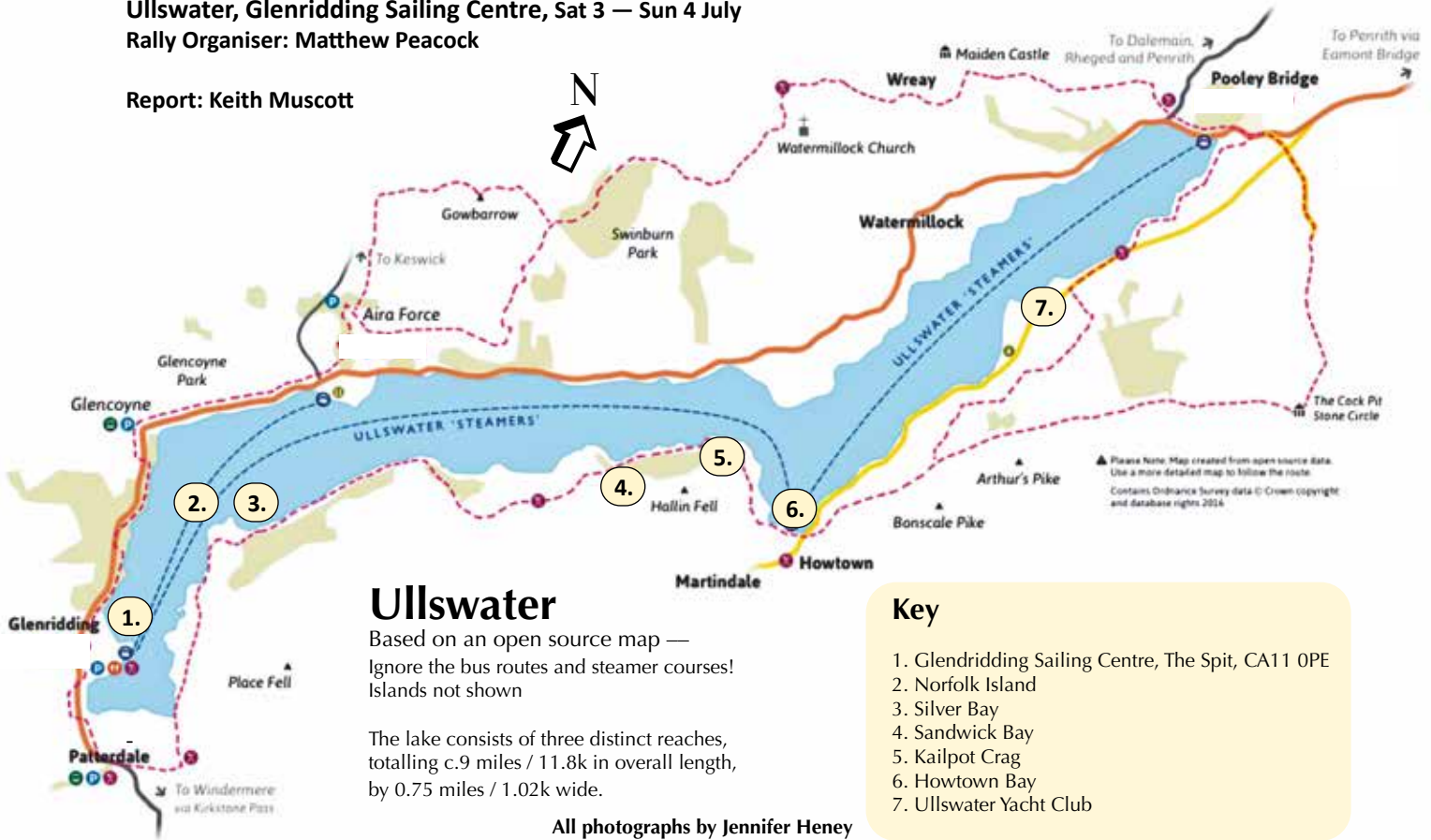
Our congratulations go to Matthew, who was a great host and worked so hard to make the day a success. Including his slick transition to tugboat skipper. A most enjoyable 'daysail'. *KM*

#### NOTES

The plans for Simpleton I & II were offered in a sailing magazine years ago. I reprinted the Simpleton II plans in the DCA Journal: Part I in DC229 and Part II in DC230. It's a good-looking little boat that deserves to be bigger! *KM*  
 Farndon chalets – see this web page: <http://psychogeographicreview.com/the-chalets-of-farndon/>

**Ullswater, Glenridding Sailing Centre, Sat 3 — Sun 4 July**  
**Rally Organiser: Matthew Peacock**

**Report: Keith Muscott**



**Ullswater**

Based on an open source map —  
 Ignore the bus routes and steamer courses!  
 Islands not shown

The lake consists of three distinct reaches,  
 totalling c.9 miles / 11.8k in overall length,  
 by 0.75 miles / 1.02k wide.

**All photographs by Jennifer Heney**

**Key**

- 1. Glenridding Sailing Centre, The Spit, CA11 0PE
- 2. Norfolk Island
- 3. Silver Bay
- 4. Sandwick Bay
- 5. Kailpot Crag
- 6. Howtown Bay
- 7. Ullswater Yacht Club

**G**LENRIDDING SC GENEROUSLY DISCOUNTED their fees to DCA members for this meeting, reducing them to £35 for the weekend. This included tractor-assisted launch and recovery plus use of the car and boat park. ( And in our case, storing our inflatable kayak *Zeffiretti* in a back office... just in case we felt like using it... )

The Centre was very busy all weekend hiring out boats, bikes, canoes, kayaks, stand-ups and various other bits and pieces to a steady stream of customers. The traditional boats they offer for hire are Lune Whammels, moulded in GRP by Bill Bailiff of Character Boats, from one of the last and best wooden whammels built for the salmon fishery at Sunderland Point, Lancashire. They also offer a number of more modern designs.

The DCA fleet was a varied collection, too, and we had a few heavy boats to keep the tractor drivers on the go.

Matthew had written a detailed preamble for this rally in the NW section of the Forum. He'd announced that he hoped to borrow *Mystery*, a big open trimaran capable of carrying 'seven crew and a dog'. His appeal for volunteer crew led to a subtle shift of personnel around our various dinghies.

Solway Dory built *Mystery* as a

one-off. She is about twenty feet long with three masts. The difference in their lengths suggests that she should be described as a cat-headed schooner (no jib).

Matthew said that the experience of sailing her suggested that she should be steered primarily by the set of the sails, with only a light hand on the tiller. She has such an exotic appearance that I had difficulty deciding whether my private name for her should be the Admiral's Barge or the Chief's War Canoe. Either way, she had no difficulty in covering the water at a rate of knots, appearing quite unexpectedly in different places throughout Saturday. Not content with just the War Canoe, Matthew also brought his CLC dory.

Jenny and I arrived on Thursday evening and drove straight to Glenridding SC, detached *Jonathan Seagull*

**Attended:**

- Matthew Peacock
- Michael Donnellan
- Raymond Simmons
- Margaret Hardy
- Jennifer Heney & Keith Muscott
- Colin Bell
- Simon Rippon
- Roger Blamire & Leonie Griffin
- Rob Wilkinson
- Anne & Andy Rushton
- John Booth
- Jeremy (*Jez*) Brown & Julie

- CLC Northeaster
- plus Solway Dory Trimaran
- Trimaran *Mystery*, Sat. 3<sup>rd</sup>
- " " " " " " "
- " " " " " " "
- Falmouth Bass Boat
- 13ft trad. clinker una Rig
- Enterprise
- Mk.2 Wayfarer
- 5.2m Welsford Pathfinder
- " " " " " " "
- Mirror 53814
- Wayfarer

- Hilda*
- Mystery* (Schooner-rigged)
- Jonathan Seagull*
- Puffin*
- Kindly Light*
- Susannah*
- Cirrus*
- Red Kite*



Matthew approaches us in his home-built CLC Northeast(er), *Hilda*. (See the front cover, too)

The forecasts had prophesied an end to the fine weather to coincide with the rally. Saturday was showery and there was a distinct lack of wind. We all stoged about introducing ourselves to other attendees as they came within hailing distance. The word was passed around that we would beach the boats in Sandwick Bay for lunch.

The GSC staff had warned us, ‘By the way, there will be a big race coming up from the Yacht Club during the day, nearly 200 boats, so keep clear of them if you can.’

So over lunch, and for some time after, we watched 155 boats

pass us, heading SW to round Norfolk Island and then return to the YC, as we sailed back through them — a total of 14 miles for them, in calms and shifting breezes.

from the campervan, then carried on to find a place at Gillside campsite. There is a direct footpath to Glenridding from there, but we kept what we could under the boat’s cover to lessen the burden when walking down to the Centre.

Friday was arguably our most pleasurable time on the water, even though we didn’t sail far. We had a good breeze and the sun shone for most of the time. An agile una-rigged dinghy with a tan sail kept appearing, so we closed to see if it might be one of us. Sure enough it was Matthew in his CLC Northeast(er) dory (see top photograph). In print he names the boat a ‘CLC Northeast(er)’ — with brackets — because, ‘... I rightly or wrongly chopped 18 inches off the stern, as I think rudders should hang vertically and the dory ‘tombstone’ transom is mostly cosmetic.

‘I also modified other details, so you could say *Hilda* is a bit of a Frankenboat. Incidentally, *Hilda* is named after my lovely, kind, gentle, teetotal Methodist great aunt. After naming the boat I Googled ‘Hilda’ and discovered she was the horrific chief valkyrie — the very opposite of my aunt. Must be a moral there somewhere.’

Matthew built his Northeast(er) from a Fyne Boats kit. It is essentially a rowing dory for one or two oarsmen. The finished hull weight is ± 100lbs / 45.5 kilos. The designed auxiliary sail plan is for a modest low aspect gunter sloop, but Matthew ordered a Goat Island Skiff lugsail from Goacher Sails of Windermere, and specified an extra 10 square feet to be added along the foot. And yes, she is nippy. The foils were made to NACA specs and a carbon fibre mast was located on eBay for £80.

After arranging things with the SC staff, including finding a temporary home for *Zeffy*, we were sailing by 14:00hrs on Friday, later than planned. Off we went around a couple of islands, nosed into Silver Bay, met up with *Hilda*, then tacked back to the Centre, to bring her gently into the wind and make a soft landfall as the tractor appeared to haul the boat out. Just over two hours sailing, but very enjoyable and a lot of other stuff had been done before the weekend started properly on the water.



The Birkett Memorial, Kailpot Crag

The first boat, a VXOne, had a stupendous lead on the return leg and was being sailed immaculately, but she did not appear in the first ten on corrected time.



Schooner-rigged trimaran *Mystery* on her trailer



Mystery on the beach at Sandwick Bay, in a rare dry moment

with the binoculars: ‘There’s a plaque set into a cliff somewhere on the lake that celebrates the success of a senior QC in saving Ullswater from becoming a reservoir and suffering the same fate as Thirlmere and Haweswater. You can see it from the water, but not from the lakeside path running over the top of the cliff.’

Surprisingly for a lake blessed with an encircling ring of lovely fells, Ullswater does not offer many rock faces that drop straight into the water. I searched the shore through the bins and saw the first possibility miles away on the

The overall winner was an RS400. A Wayfarer was in the first ten. The second race on Sunday was curtailed to suit the light conditions.

Colin Bell had to use his trusty Seagull on leaving Sandwick as he’d discovered a split in *Puffin’s* mast when it opened up in a gust. He decided to return the boat to the builder for repair immediately — David Moss in the old port of Skippool inside the River Wyre Estuary Country Park.

Matthew, Leonie, Jenny and myself ate outside the Travellers Rest on Saturday evening, as the rain finally petered out. No meals were served inside, which was probably just as well, judging by the television audience’s surge of interest in the English team’s journey towards the final of the European Cup, as it blasted through the windows.

On Sunday morning we launched into heavier rain and worse visibility. ‘Do you really want to go out in this weather?’ asked the young Sailing Centre tractor driver with a broad grin, as he hitched on the Falmouth Bass Boat — clad only in jeans and tee shirt in the full-on Lakes downpour, of course.

By the time we reached the two closest islands the sun was shining through the mist and we’d hauled up the mainsail to join the jib and mizzen. Most of the others had packed and left early for home, so we no longer had an exotic mix of boats to keep us company.

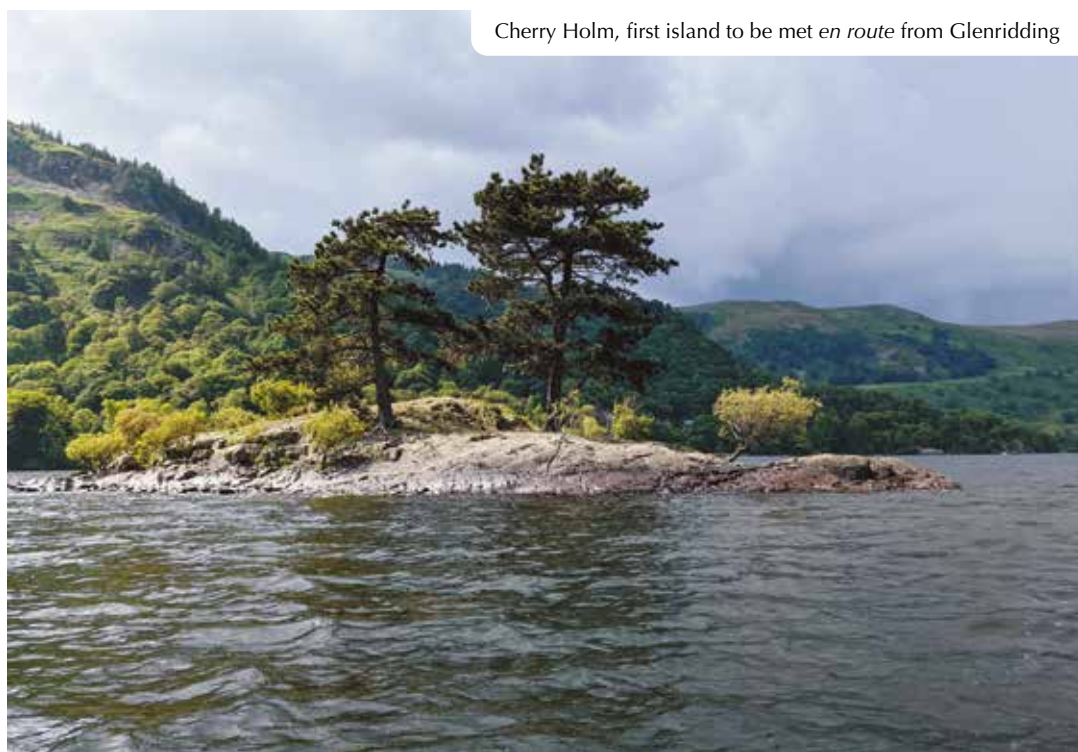
The breeze dropped, but the sun continued to shine. As lunch was scheduled to be further down the lake at Howtown, we fired up the outboard and pattered on our way. I started to fuss

southern arm of the big bay that encloses Howtown. I put it out of my mind until we closed with it. When we did, the wind failed completely and I could have nudged the cliff face under Kailpot Crag with the Bass Boat’s stem without risking damage to it. I eased the motor into reverse and asked Jenny to take photographs while we were still close. The plaque is of Westmorland Greenstone (hard green slate) and carved into it are a few words:

‘In Memory of Norman William Birkett, Baron of Ulverston. He loved Ullswater. He strove to maintain its Beauty for all to Enjoy.’

A day or two later I dredged up memories from my childhood in Cumberland (as it was called then). Manchester Corporation’s attempt to turn Ullswater into a reservoir like Thirlmere had been a cause célèbre in its day, especially as they had done no proper research to yield reliable hydrological data first. Had they been successful, a weir would have been built on the River Eamont at Pooley Bridge that would have raised the lake by 3 feet.

Cherry Holm, first island to be met *en route* from Glenridding





Waiting for the Birkett race to pass at Sandwick Bay, Saturday

The Corporation promoted its Bill in the 1961/2 parliamentary session, to immediate and loud public objection. Birkett's stirring speech to the House of Lords debate in February 1962 helped to approve a motion to exclude Ullswater from the Bill. Few victories are ever complete or last forever, and before the 1960s were out a modified scheme was implemented, an underground pipeline. But it does not affect the level, the appearance nor the amenity of Ullswater. Lord Birkett lived long enough to read some of the many letters and telegrams of congratulation before he succumbed to longstanding cardiac problems only two days after the debate.

I searched the website of Ullswater Yacht Club some days later, too; a silver salver is awarded to the winner of the Lord Birkett Memorial Trophy Race. There is usually a maximum of 230 entries, but this was reduced to 155 this year because of Covid restrictions. It is always held on the first weekend in July... and we hadn't twigged what the huge armada of boats was all about!

Next to Kailpot Crag is Geordie's Crag, and we rounded that to enter Howtown Bay, at the end of which we found Leonie Griffin and Roger Blamire in Roger's Mk2 Wayfarer *Susannah*. With them was the organiser of the rally, Matthew Peacock, in *Hilda*. They had already finished their refreshments, so the conversation was brief and they left when a good sailing breeze appeared. We settled down to enjoy the views. In the distance we saw the second Birkett race, which is always held on the Sunday, and they were becalmed too. It was abandoned after the wind failed.

It petered out completely as we left Howtown Bay. We had barely reached Sandwick Bay when we started the outboard. We passed Roger close to Glencoyne, with Leonie on the oars of his Wayfarer. Simon was packing up at the Centre, and Matthew had made it back quickly before the breeze had dropped.

He had done a really great job on the rally, not least for arranging to borrow *Mystery* for the day.

We returned to the lake the following morning to pick up *Jonathan Seagull* and *Zeffy*. The weather had settled and it was a bit of a tug to leave. The meeting had surpassed expectations, with the appearance of a novel boat, *Mystery*, and some new members who seem very suited to the Association; we look forward to sailing with them again before too long. *KM*

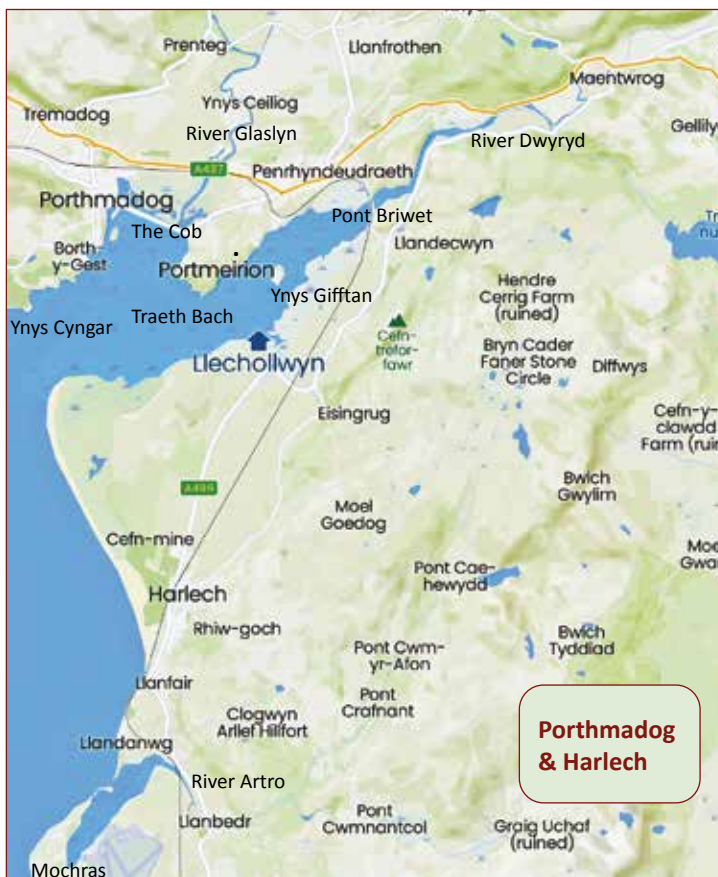


Roger and Leonie leave Howtown. The distant Sunday Birkett race can be seen

**Sat 24-Sun 25 July, Llechollwyn, Traeth Bach, Dwyrdd Estuary, Keith Muscott**  
**HW (BST) Sat 24th 09:25, Sun 25th 10:15.**

We booked our site early at Llech, bearing in mind the stimulating effect of Covid on domestic holidays. Unfortunately I didn't raise my concerns on the Forum, and when we arrived at Llechollwyn on Thursday evening we learned that a number of DCA members had called to make bookings only to be told that they were far too late. Very galling. Llech is a small and attractive campsite directly opposite Portmeirion, and it fills fast.

A reasonable forecast encouraged us to rise early on Friday and launch into the flooding tide. Our plan was to close with Portmeirion, turn upriver, leave Ynys Giffan to starboard then pass under the rail and road bridge, Pont Briwet. It crosses the River Dwyrdd close to Penrhyndeudraeth before it spreads out and becomes the broad estuary to the sea, embracing a number of channels in its wide sweep of sand at low water. The bridge had been rebuilt and reinforced since I last visited it and I wanted to see what it was like now. After that we would take a break further upriver.



Dawn start. Photograph: Jennifer Heney

We rose at 05:00, with no time for even an abbreviated breakfast, filled a flask with hot water and wrapped up a few morsels for later. I had already inflated our Gumotex kayak so we loaded it quickly onto its C-Tug 'trolley', strapped it down and pulled it quietly through the campsite gate to the shoreline. It was a softly lit, magical

morning. A long drawn-out dawn. Neither of us had felt on top form the night before, but we rallied quickly.

The rising tide was a silver line far away on the other side of Porthmadog estuary, so we had miscalculated by a fair margin. I gave the kayak a few final psi, we checked our equipment and stowed it, but there was still no sign of water close to us. We chatted quietly.

A farmer drove his Land Rover onto the beach, released his dogs and came over to us. He was a man with a grievance. He rents land abutting on the estuary as sheep pasture, much valued because of its reputed flavouring of mutton, but the new signs erected around Llechollwyn announce that it is now a dog-friendly campsite. Our plaintiff had seen campers' dogs checking out his flock. We knew that the site wardens are responsible dog owners themselves, so it seemed a shame that their welcome to the site had led to trouble off it. We were not prepared to carry any accusations back to the farm, of course.

The conversation was cut short by a finger of tide curling round the sandbank closest to us. The cliché for fast tides over treacherous sands has always been, 'It flows in with the speed of a galloping horse!', always said with the intention of alarming the listener. I can say that at close quarters it is more the speed of a purposeful human walk – not a saunter, but not a gallop either, horse or human.

We carried the kayak out into it until we were knee-deep and boarded. At this stage it was not possible to approach Portmeirion directly owing to the big shoal between it and us that had still to be covered, so reaching the bridge took longer than we had anticipated with the tide behind us. The tide contradicted the flow of the river, so there was a bit of a popple, too.

We closed with the bridge (*right*) and slowed to weigh up the possible risks, which were real enough if we got it wrong. We could see the tide running in under the arches and swelling up the sides of the squat pillars. It seems the best tactic is still to pass through one of the gaps on the north side; I chose the second one in from the left and we were through in a trice with deep water under us.

Once past the bridge we had to decide quickly whether to carry on or return, as the tide took hold of us much more strongly in the constrained river. A kayaking dream of mine had been to paddle up the Dwyrdd to Maentwrog and back, which is not often done both ways; usually there are friends waiting with a vehicle to retrieve the bold adventurers and their vessel at Maentwrog. This was the moment I chose to share the idea with Jennifer and she was enthusiastic, so there was no pause for us to discuss it. We just kept going.

The Dwyrdd is tidal all the way up to the Maentwrog bridges (the old and the new, which stand close together). The tide had stopped just short of them when we arrived and the water was dark and still, the river briefly balanced by the sea. Above Maentwrog the Dwyrdd is shallow, with more obstacles to slow you down. When you visit the ancient and wonderful slate bridge, Pont Dol y Moch (*right*), about one and a half miles above Maentwrog, it is clear that the river would need to be swollen with flood water to make it freely navigable. But the lower reaches along which we paddled, between Pont Briwet and the perfect little Victorian village of Maentwrog, are resplendent in their variety and natural beauty. The scene changes with every twist in the river, and its width swells then drops dramatically to a mere few feet shortly before Maentwrog.

Upstream from Pont Briwet it meanders widely for about a mile and a half, contained loosely by grassy banks and sandy shores. Then the sides become steeper, the water runs faster and two important features of archaeological interest are revealed – slate quays. The first, Cei Newydd, lies to starboard and is the smaller. The biggest, Tyddyn Isa (*below*), appears on the north bank and it has been renovated in recent times, together with two small buildings at either end of it, a crudely built office and an explosives store. The quay has many short flights of steps along its length down to the water and vertical stakes of slate are half buried in the ground behind them, to take mooring lines from small boats.



Diphwys (grid ref SH712467), or *Duffws*, close to Blaenau Ffestiniog, was the first large-scale organised Welsh slate quarry to be developed in northwest Wales – the whole slate landscape here is now a World Heritage Site. Diphwys started small in the late 1760s, the idea of a local man with a great name: Methusalem Jones. He'd had a dream that convinced him it was a perfect slate-quarrying site. By 1800 it was being managed by William Turner and William Casson, both from the Lake District. By 1820 they had started tunnelling underground.

Transporting the slate from Diphwys down to the sea was less easily done. It was taken on carts drawn by horses, or in panniers on the backs of mules. When they reached the Dwyrdd the slates were dropped at specialised quays such as Tyddyn Isa (*left*), to be recorded in ledgers then stacked on small boats with a maximum burden of 6 tons by gangs known locally as 'Philistines'.

How did they accomplish this? We managed to paddle up to Maentwrog and return to Lechollwyn on one tide in a kayak with a draught of a couple of inches, and we still just failed to get home with sufficient water under us. These river boats, sailed by two Philistines, carried their cargoes six miles and more down to Ynys Cyngar, the point to the west of Borth y Gest on Morfa Bychan, where they were transferred to seagoing schooners. They used the big tides and carried sails and oars to aid their progress. They were paid 12 shillings for six tons in the best of times, and took on cargoes of lime,



(This page) Some of the delights of the headwaters of the Dwyryd  
(Bottom right) Approaching Maentwrog bridges. By Jennifer Heney

animal feed and domestic wares to sell on to farmers and villagers on the trip back.

More generally, it was the beginning of a heady period during which Welsh slate roofed the buildings of the world. Porthmadog and its harbour were still to be developed and the vast Traeth Mawr, the estuary of the Glaslyn, had not yet been bisected by an embankment, The Cob – also known as Britannia Terrace – which was to reclaim 5,000 acres from the sea. The Cob eventually carried a railway to Porthmadog Harbour and the slate quarries bloomed on this side of Snowdonia. The diehards running the Dwyryd slate transport system were slow to embrace the new transport, so they continued until 1845, when the Festiniog railway was fully completed and signalled the end for them.

We paddled past Tyddyn Isa and made our way along the disorienting, meandering stream. We passed the mouth of the small tributary that flows down from Llyn Trawsfynydd through the wooded ravine of Ceunant Llennyrch. At times we came close to the road, the A487, and returned waves from people tending their gardens or sitting in a hotel garden, but mostly we inhabited a small private waterworld which we quickly passed through, driven by the big tide. There is now a reserve to the northwest of the river here, which is not surprising. The banks became lush with flowers and shrubs. Trees leaned in over the water. There is prolific and varied bird life – a clay bank was riddled with sandmartin nests. Herons fished the margins. Sudden disturbances in the shallows marked where fish were hunting small fry.

Maentwrog appeared suddenly, faster than we expected. We felt impelled to pass under the bridges to complete the outward leg properly, but the stationary water made it clear that we would have to return at full speed if we were not to be neaped in the river as it ebbed. We dug in the paddles and took no respite until we passed beneath Pont Briwet again and drew level with Portmeirion. Even so, we dried out 400 yards from our starting point and I had to come ashore for the little trolley to haul out the kayak. The morsels remained uneaten and the Thermos flask stayed full.

On Saturday the weather enforced a rest day. A strong breeze blew all day and it set up a discouraging choppy sea that no boat sailed on. Dave Bursnall visited



us at Llech – the first time we had met him face to face. He lives only a few miles away on the other side of Harlech, close to Mochras (also known as Shell Island). He can look down the A496 and see his Devon Yawl on its mooring in the snug estuary of the river Artro, with its inner bay open to the sea through a narrow channel protected by a bar – Bar Newydd. Called ‘new’ because the river once flowed into the sea south of Mochras. The Earl of Winchelsea diverted it in 1819.





wished to enjoy the main bay of Traeth Bach.

John is a relatively new member, and he had pulled his Mirror out of storage and blown the dust off it before setting out. He soon had a leak to worry him and keep them both busy with the baler. This did not, however, interfere with their full enjoyment of the day. They will be very welcome attenders of rallies in future and have a lot to offer.

We paddled off into the realm of the Glastraeth\* like lambs to the slaughter. What promises to be navigable backwaters and swatchways are labyrinths waiting for the unwary. The big tufts of marsh grass often have deep channels between them for you to drop into when you step into the water to haul the boat when it has become stuck in a shallower place right by the abyss...

The time it took to sniff out a route to clear water did not leave us any extra for getting around Giffan, but we made it nevertheless, then we paddled a good way down channel past Portmeirion after getting round the island, before cutting over to the inshore channel on the other side and returning along it to Llech to haul out.

This was not a successful rally in terms of attenders, but it was excellent regarding attainment on the water, and we were really pleased with our performance on the river in getting to and from Maentwrog on one tide. I think the Traeth Bach rally still has a great deal to offer, and next season we will stress the availability of two other campsites nearby – launching here is not dependent on camping at Llech, as even the closest route onto the water is outside their limits. In order to range more widely, we need to consider days with morning and evening high waters that would allow us to leave the estuary and visit such places as Harlech, Mochras or, to the north, Criccieth – with its castle and Cadwalladers ice cream... This has been suggested already by John Hughes and Dave Bursnall. *KM*

Before that the ancient settlement would have been approached through the village of Llandanwg, which now lies across the estuary. I've yet to ask Dave if he is suitably grateful to the aristocracy for providing the snug anchorage for his Devon Yawl...

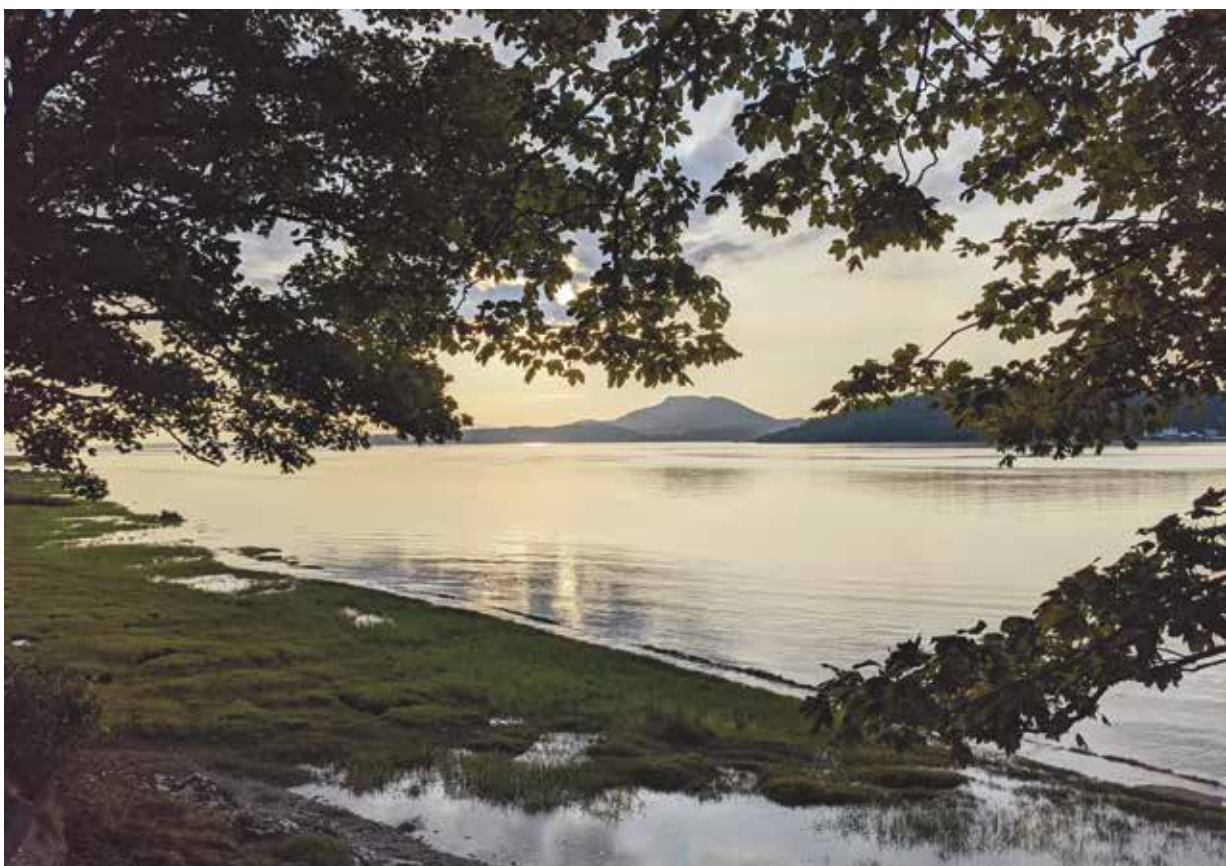
The 'new' layer of sand covers the very interesting geology of the beach; it was rediscovered in the late 1960s when the BGS drilled a borehole at Mochras Farm.

Sunday was much better and we returned to the water. As promised, John Watt drove over from Merseyside for the day with his crew, Beth Williams, and his Mirror *Radamès*. They had a very enjoyable day and we chatted on the beach and then saw them occasionally on the water – we were basically in different locales for most of the time we were afloat, as Jennifer and I had decided to explore the saltings before paddling around Ynys Giffan and they naturally

\* *Glastraeth* = 'green beach' – saltings

(Top) John Watt and Beth Williams with Mirror *Radamès*

(Below) Sunset looking down channel by Jennifer Heney



Sat 21 – Sun 22 August, Glasson, Lune Estuary,  
Chris Lavender  
HW (BST) Sat 21st 1135, Sun 22nd 1220

**Attendees**

**Saturday:**

David Bone, John Bone & Ian Watthews	Cornish Coble
Colin Bell & Matthew Cunningham	Clinker Catboat
Chris Lavender and Mike Harrington	Wayfarer
Martin & Marilyn Wright	David Moss Sea Otter

**Sunday:**

Brian Hill & Matthew Cunningham	<i>Mackerel Sky</i>
Martin & Marilyn Wright	<i>Tarka</i>



*Avocet*  
*Puffin*  
*Ben Gunn*  
*Tarka*

Glasson Dock (stock photo)

**DO WISH WEATHER FORECASTERS WOULD AT LEAST TRY** to be a bit more optimistic when presenting the weekend’s doom and gloom. Did it rain? Yes, at times. Did it spoil the sail? No it did not, we had a fantastic time!

It’s been a couple of years since we were guests of the Glasson Sailing club. For those who have never been there, the GSC has a reputation for friendly hospitality, and their location makes an excellent base for access to the Irish Sea off Morecambe Bay. This year our visit coincided with their regatta weekend, and Commodore Doug Gorton told me that we were most welcome to join in.

Then he added almost apologetically, as long as we didn’t mind the £5 charge for non-members, then it was free beer all weekend.

‘I think we could stretch to that...’

Friday afternoon saw Colin Bell and Matt Cunningham pitching up first, followed by myself in the campervan.

Time to turn, Mike, it’s the Lancaster wharf! *Chris L*



It’s the RAC, Colin and Matt offering a tow! *Chris L*



Colin was trying out his latest acquisition, a Peugeot Micro-camper, all bells and whistles contained in a small package!

The Glasson club had arranged an outdoor bar and a covered seating area for everyone to enjoy the social scene without compromising social distancing. Friday turned out to be a lovely evening and with the aid of coloured candle lights – and beer, of course – proved very enjoyable.

Saturday morning’s plan was to be on the water around 10 o’clock, as soon as the tide was full enough to allow launching from the concrete slip. David Bone, with the aid of his crew John and Ian, got the Cornish Coble rigged in no time and was launched and disappearing up river towards Lancaster before anyone else was ready. Soon, with the assistance of the Glasson members, we were all afloat, Mike and I on the Wayfarer, Colin and Matt aboard *Puffin*. Martin and Marilyn Wright, who



Marilyn in control, by Martin Wright

had turned up during Friday night, were last to launch in their sturdy Sea Otter *Tarka*.

The Lune estuary is an absolute delight to sail. The tide carries you along while you sail past mud flats and the saltmarsh. The birdlife is spectacular here. Geese, Shelduck, waders wheeling overhead and even egrets line the banks above the incoming tide.

We made good progress up the estuary, eventually rounding the corner in front of the popular waterside pub 'Snatchems' which is sadly closed awaiting a buyer. The wind began to falter as the tide slowed and we only just made it to the railway bridge before turning back downstream.

David and his crew appeared from above the bridge, the Coble slipping through the water like an eel... sails trimmed and beautifully balanced, the boat was a fine sight through the now steady rain.

Soon we found ourselves becalmed and eventually heard the distant clatter of a seagull outboard as a red-sailed boat headed towards us. Mike, forever the sailing purist, stiffened, and in one of those Alec Guinness / Star Wars moments, said, 'We do not need a tow; they can go about their business.'

I thanked our would be rescuers, Colin and Matt in *Puffin* for their thoughtfulness but assured them, we would make it in time for recovery.

The rain petered out and the wind picked up, giving us a spanking sail back down river to the club's slip. By the time we recovered the tide was sluicing past with a vengeance.

In the afternoon some of us wandered down to the Glasson locks in search of a brew. Martin and Marilyn's *Tarka* was tied up in the commercial basin awaiting the next day's tide.

They had launched late but had a nice sail before the tide made it impractical to continue. Martin had arranged with local boat builder, David Moss, who was the builder of *Tarka*, to visit his boat. That must have been a very interesting and enjoyable experience for Martin and Marilyn to have him aboard.

Later that afternoon David Moss came back to the Glasson club to continue the yarn with Colin Bell. David also built Colin's catboat *Puffin*. Now these experiences do not happen very often in anyone's lifetime and certainly not in one afternoon!

The last of our party, Brian Hill, arrived in the afternoon. Brian, like others, had been put off by the forecast and was kicking himself that he had missed a lovely day's sailing. Brian's boat, *Mackerel Sky*, a Lune Longboat, was also built locally, this time by Bill Bailiff. That made three local boats then, another rare coincidence!

Later on we had another enjoyable evening in the company of the Glasson folks in the aptly christened Tar Paul Inn, and as no money was involved, the beer became self-service. The rain came down outside, but under cover but we were nice and dry and enjoying the dancing candlelight from the tables and the songs from those who had the talent to sing them.

The weather on Sunday was sunny spells and a fresher breeze. Some of us had to leave early, leaving Matt and Brian, Martin and Marilyn to enjoy their day's sails. The crew of the Sea Otter enjoyed a quiet night in the basin and then locked out and explored the lower regions of the estuary before recovering to the slip a few hours later.

Brian and Matt took the Longboat up to Lancaster as far as the railway bridge before returning. They all reported excellent sailing in sunny conditions.

Thanks to everyone who attended, and a big thank you to all at the Glasson club for their hospitality and kind assistance, particularly Doug, Val and Jeff who couldn't do enough for us.

We will be back! **CL**

Brian and Matt in the Longboat, by Mick Bull, GSC



**Y Felinheli, Menai Strait, North Wales**  
**Saturday August 7 – Sunday August 8**  
**Colin Holt**

**Attended:**

Colin Bell 13-foot catboat by David Moss *Puffin*  
Michael Bell Gull Spirit *Ancient Mariner*

**On foot – Friday to Sunday:**

George Bell and girlfriend Millie  
Henry Bell

**On foot – Sunday:**

Colin Holt  
Leonie Griffin  
Janice Kerrisk

**I**N THE LEAD UP TO THE RALLY I WAS KEPT surprisingly busy with enquiries from members who wished to attend. Enthusiasm was high after COVID put an end to proceedings in 2020, and a total of 13 boats and their crews were looking forward to sailing. I am not sure if it was the lure of beautiful North Wales, the excellent sailing on the Menai Strait or just the Saturday night social around the campfire!

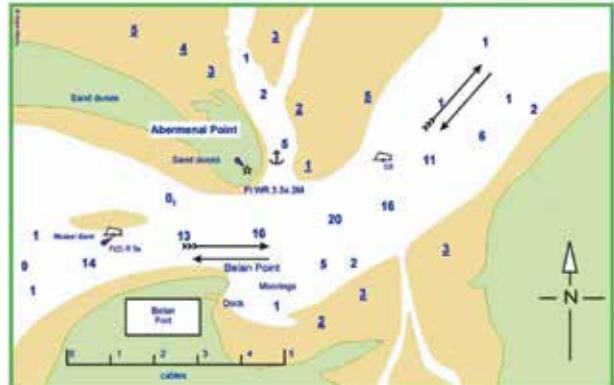
Thirteen boats would have been something of a record in recent years, but it unfortunately proved unlucky for some... As the weekend approached, the weather deteriorated and the forecasts painted a very bleak picture with W/SW winds gusting up to F6/7, torrential rain and thunderstorms. Needless to say, I was kept busy again weather-watching and keeping up to date with the 11 boats and crews that ultimately decided against sailing.

That left two boats: Colin and son Michael Bell advised they were going to sail out to Abermenai on Thursday 5th in an attempt to beat the worst of the weather. They planned to stay four nights and leave the following Monday. You may recall that Colin Bell spent the 2018 Menai Rally alone, sheltering from a F8 gale in a flooded quarry in the Menai Strait, whilst his son Michael was stormbound at Abermenai in his 35-foot ketch!

Colin Holt (*Left*) meets up with Colin Bell at Abermenai



**Abermenai Point — Menai Strait**



**Approach**

From either direction, turn into Abermenai anchorage from due South (anchorage bears 000°). Keep close inshore (20-50 metres off shore) to anchor 1 cable north of brick hut<sup>1</sup>, partially obscured by sand dunes.

**Dangers**

Tail of sandbanks extend west of C8 buoy. Tide sets across them. Anchorage is tide-ride, holding poor to fair. Twin streams running through the anchorage set boats at unusual angles to wind, tide and each other. Re-anchoring in the small hours is a well-established pastime. As westerly winds increase, so boats lie more regularly. Boats on warp should anchor well clear of others to avoid tangling. Anchors tend to lift for no apparent reason<sup>2</sup>.

**Shelter**

Temporary anchorage, protected from south-west to north-west. Untenable in easterlies. Uncertain holding on sand. Tide-ride.

**NOTE:** <sup>1</sup>These notes are intended for yachts, not dinghies. The anchor symbol on the chart does not apply. DCA boats tuck in behind the point and usually dry out or camp ashore.

<sup>2</sup>See the article *The Dire Strait* by Dave Morton in journal DC243, Autumn 2019, also repeated in 'Bob Hicks' MAIB (US).

**Note also:** The Chart and the notes are © Ralph Morris and the North West Venturers Yacht Club (Beaumaris)

Colin and Michael left Dinas boatyard a little later than planned on Thursday afternoon in a fresh F4/5 westerly. They made use of the last of the ebb as they beat up the main channel to Caernarfon. They were carrying additional camping equipment for the rest of the Bell family to camp at Abermenai and the extra weight served well as ballast!

On reaching Caernarfon in quite lively conditions, the tide had turned. They were now beating into wind and the new flood. Progress was more difficult, not to mention very wet. They finally crossed the main channel and into the calmer and more sheltered waters at Abermenai. *Puffin* had shipped around four gallons of water but both boats came through unscathed. The boats were hauled high up the beach on the evening tide in order to gain maximum shelter from the sand dunes. This was repeated twice daily at each subsequent high water as conditions worsened.

Friday was atrocious with relentless heavy rain throughout the day and winds reaching the forecast F6 plus. I received a phone call from Colin in the afternoon advising against us sailing as conditions were so bad. Colin had had to climb to the top of the sand dunes in order obtain a mobile phone signal and make the call!



**Above** *Puffin* dried out on the HW mark. **Below:** 'I could see the two little boats being tossed around, straining at their anchor warps...'



Friday night saw the arrival of the rest of the Bell family on foot. Colin's grandsons George and Henry, together with George's girlfriend Millie, arrived at 11.30pm and camped ashore with Michael in the lee of the sand dunes. Colin camped aboard *Puffin* as usual.

The stormy theme continued on Saturday and all parties were largely confined to their tents. However, breakfast was taken in the relative comfort of *Puffin* which provided warmth and shelter for the whole party of five!



**Above right** Colin Bell (Left) with his son Mike (right, wearing yellow cag) and grandsons Henry and George with girlfriend Millie



**Above** Colin Bell greets Colin Holt, who says about this shot: 'I posted the picture of Colin peeping out of *Puffin's* tent on the DCA Facebook page together with a few words about him. It has had over 330 positive responses to date, which is quite unbelievable!'

A break in the wet weather materialised around midday and prompted the Bell family to collect driftwood for a camp fire. The weather obliged and the



**Above** Colin Holt, Leonie Griffin, Colin Bell and Janice Kerrisk. The following day (*Monday*) the girls joined us for a walk from Ravens Point (Trearddur Bay) around the coastal cliffs to Rhoscolyn and back – in lighter winds *KM*

fire was lit. A very enjoyable couple of hours followed with lunch cooked on the fire and even an impromptu game of cricket!

A tennis ball, a traffic cone as a wicket and a driftwood bat were all discovered among the tide-wrack. The strong wind continued throughout and unfortunately after a couple of hours the heavy rain returned and broke up the party.

Another squally and wet night afloat followed for Colin, despite being tucked in close to the dunes and the high water mark. However, Sunday promised to be better, more wind but drier! Michael and family managed a lively sail on Sunday morning on the top of the tide and within the confines of the bay at Abermenai.

I arrived on foot mid-morning; it had stopped raining but was still blowing hard. As I approached Abermenai,

I could see the two little boats being tossed around and straining at their anchor warps. The Strait beyond had white-capped waves and the backdrop of Snowdonia was dark and menacing. Today, this often idyllic spot looked wild, hostile and uninviting.

Colin was aboard *Puffin* and Michael was checking on *Ancient Mariner*. We exchanged greetings and waited for the tide to recede. Before long, Colin was able to paddle ashore and we enjoyed a coffee and a good catch-up around the extinguished camp fire. It was good to meet the rest of the Bell family too, before they went for a swim in the sea!

Colin and I enjoyed a very pleasant lunch aboard *Puffin*. With the kettle on and inside his extremely well made tent, we were warm and comfortable. At this point we heard voices being carried on the wind, it was Leonie and Janice, all the way from Edinburgh and it was great to meet them. They had travelled to North Wales especially to attend the rally with Keith Muscott and Jenny and also walked out to Abermenai to meet Colin and family. We were both very impressed by their efforts but also disappointed that the weather had curtailed our original plans for the weekend.

By mid afternoon the sun came out and we all left Colin and Michael to prepare for their trip back to Y Felinheli the next morning.

Monday was bright but with a brisk SW breeze. Colin left Abermenai first about an hour before high water with Michael in hot pursuit in his Gull. They felt their way over the sandbanks directly to Caernarfon where they picked up the flood in the main channel. It was mainly a run back to Dinas boatyard and Colin was quite pleased that Michael was unable to catch up with *Puffin* on the final leg home!

Before I left Abermenai on Sunday, Colin reminded me how he and his family had been visiting every summer for decades, firstly with his immediate family and later with his grandchildren too. They all love Abermenai and it meant so much to him to have spent another weekend there together. In Colin's own words, 'We have had a great weekend!' *CH*



**Left** Colin holds his DCA mug and relaxes under *Puffin's* well-designed and well-made tent

**Below** Leonie's photograph of the start of the walk down to Abermenai (miles off to the left)



**Dee Estuary/Liverpool Bay, Sat 26-Sun 27 June**

**John Hughes**

**Sleep aboard at Hilbre**

**HW (Hilbre) Sat 26/6 1300 9.0m, Sun 27/6 0112 9.3m,  
1346 8.8m.**

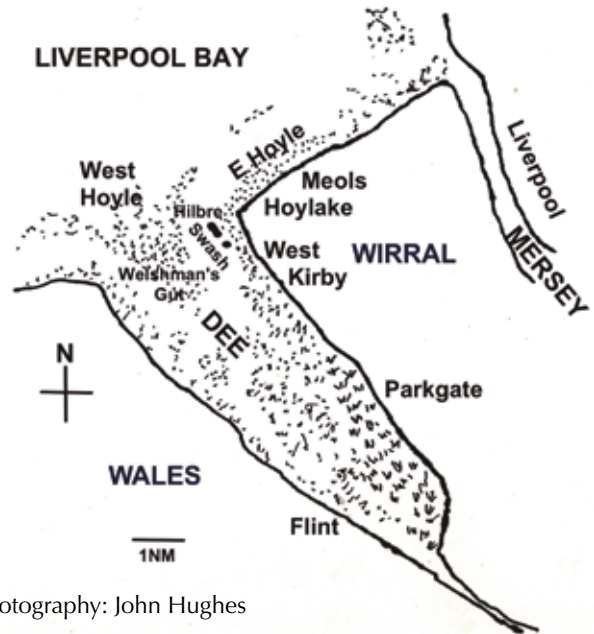
**Participants**

Mark O'nions in *Wayfarer Helen*

John Hughes on *Hitia 17 Star Catcher*

*Joined by non-DCA member from Hoylake SC:*

Joe Tyler in *Halcyon 23 My Way*



Photography: John Hughes

**M**ARK ARRIVED FROM SHROPSHIRE at Dove Point slipway, Meols, on the north Wirral shore at 10.00. We dithered about the strong NW wind inshore waters forecast, but indications suggested this would not affect Liverpool Bay, so at noon we decided to sail. Besides, Mark was very keen to gain coastal experience.



*Wayfarer Helen and Mark*

run out of water, then turned about to beat back to our overnight anchorage at Hilbre. Beating down the Swash with the full spring ebb stream under us, even against the breeze that was light, raised significant trains of waves which I believe sated Mark's yearning for sea experience, but we were soon back round the northern tip of the island and into the calm waters of the anchorage on the NE side. Here we dried out about 4 hours after HW.

*John, Joe & Mark – with mussels*



At HW we made down the channel close-hauled to a light NE breeze, then passed outside the East Hoyle Bank, taking the breeze on our quarter, for a relaxing sail southwestward towards the mouth of the Dee Estuary. We entered the estuary by the Hilbre Swash, passing close round the northern tip of Hilbre, and ran up to the 'Seldom Seen' buoy off West Kirby, (which once marked rocks of this name, now long buried and never seen, so the buoy now serves merely as a racing mark.)

We reached across to the Welshman's Gut, exploring towards the Welsh shore until we seemed likely to

After a walk round the island, and collecting some mussels for dinner from the foreshore, Joe invited us to cook and eat in the cockpit of *My Way* where he generously produced a bottle of wine to accompany the mussels. We returned to our respective berths as the tide started to flood about 22.00, and a spectacularly large orange moon rose at midnight. The anchorage was not completely calm; some NW swell came in during the early hours, but it remained comfortable enough.

We floated in the morning by 10.30 and had an initially interestingly challenging beat against light air and the flood, to return to Meols by HW at 13.30. Despite the ominous forecast, it had proved to be an enjoyable weekend of light conditions with a mixture of light, broken cloud and sunshine, made doubly memorable by the delicious feast of mussels with white wine aboard *My Way*. *JH*



*Mark (left) and John*



# Sailing Rigs in the Rafters...

The Mersey Canoe Club, Hilbre Island, Sunday  
August 22nd, Mike Cottam.

Report by Keith Muscott

John Hughes flagged up this visit on the Forum:  
'Historic Sailing Canoe/Kayak Collection on Show at  
Mersey Canoe Club'

The Mersey Canoe Club is opening its doors on Hilbre Island for anyone who would like to see their historic collection of sailing canoes on Sunday 22nd August, 2021.

The Mersey Canoe Club was founded in the 19th century as a northern splinter group from the Royal Canoe Club on the Thames and has maintained its clubhouse on the island since 1896. This will be a rare occasion to see their unique collection of canoes.

Hilbre lies in the mouth of the Dee estuary at the western extremity of the Wirral peninsula. It is a tidal island cut off from the mainland for about 2h either side of HW, and is a 3 mile walk across wet sand from the north end of West Kirby marine lake (Wirral). Aim to depart on foot from West Kirby at 8.00 and plan to remain on the island until the tide recedes in the afternoon. *JH*

**T**HIS EVENT WAS OFFERED IN CELEBRATION OF the MCC's 150th anniversary, so it was a great opportunity to visit their historic base on Hilbre. The island is a fascinating place in its own right: it has been occupied since the Stone Age, and in mediaeval times it absorbed a strong Anglo-Saxon and Christian influence through its close links to Chester Cathedral.

The sandstone strata alone reward the modest effort needed to explore the island. They are weather-worn into shapes that are sublime, grotesque and occasionally perilous in turn.

The MCC clubhouse (*below*) teases the imagination in a different way. A deceptively plain construction from the outside, you ascend several steps and enter a kitchen with water laid on and provision for cooking by gas. Above your head the kitchen roof space holds canoe sailing rigs from years gone by – spars and sails – as well as domestic items. (*See photograph next page*)

Inside, you are surprised by a comfortable well-



Hilbre Island seen from Middle Eye. A third island, Little Eye, completes the small archipelago (*photograph: Wikimedia*)



Middle Eye and just above it Little Eye disappearing into the tide, seen from Hilbre Island *photo by Keith Muscott*

appointed living room with a stove and many authentic photographs and other memorabilia from the club's life in the 19th century onwards. The dormitory next door has bunk beds for those who are staying longer than a day to work on the hut or paddle and sail when the tide allows. The MCC has maintained its den in this spot since 1896.

Four DCA members, Mike Cottam, Chris Woodworth Jennifer Heney and I, joined the club officers on Hilbre early in the day, and much later, when the tide rose sufficiently to float them, we met two members of the Open Canoe Sailing Group and several kayakers from the DCP – the Dyffryn Conwy Paddlers. As the breeze had increased with the tide, they all had a satisfyingly lively crossing. It was good to see a demonstration of the sort of aquatic action we had walked over to celebrate.

Speaking of walking over, Jennifer and I left Anglesey very early and arrived at West Kirby at 07:53. The shore



party with Mike Cottam had left well before that. By the time we had located a parking space along the Prom and found our boots we were close to taking a bit of a chance with the tide, but we arrived on the island after a 45-minute walk at the same time as a morning delivery by the RNLI caterpillar tractor (see right, just leaving).

When the initial conversation began to subside, Captain Charles ('...call me Charlie') Warren offered us orange juice cut with Prosecco Frizzante, and then opened up the 'cellarage' beneath the hut so that some of the Club's prized possessions could be pulled out into view. Not vintage wines, but a number of old sailing canoes. *Lily* was lovely – and a Canadian canoe that Paddy said was the best he had ever paddled, from any era. An authentic MacGregor was off the island being overhauled, but a modern era Oughtred MacGegor, *Twig* – I think the 15ft 8ins version – was rigged by Charlie for our delectation.

Soon the gas was lit and bacon sandwiches were distributed while canoes were pushed in and out of their hiding places under the hut. Cans of lager or Boddington's bitter were passed around next, for the benefit of non-drivers. Opinions flowed freely and we got on famously, with few disagreements. It was a long time between Low Waters, so the frying pan saw service again and this time it was sausages served with delicious bread. The hospitality shown to us by just two or three Club members was remarkable and the beneficiaries were duly grateful. Offers of donations to the Club were waved away.

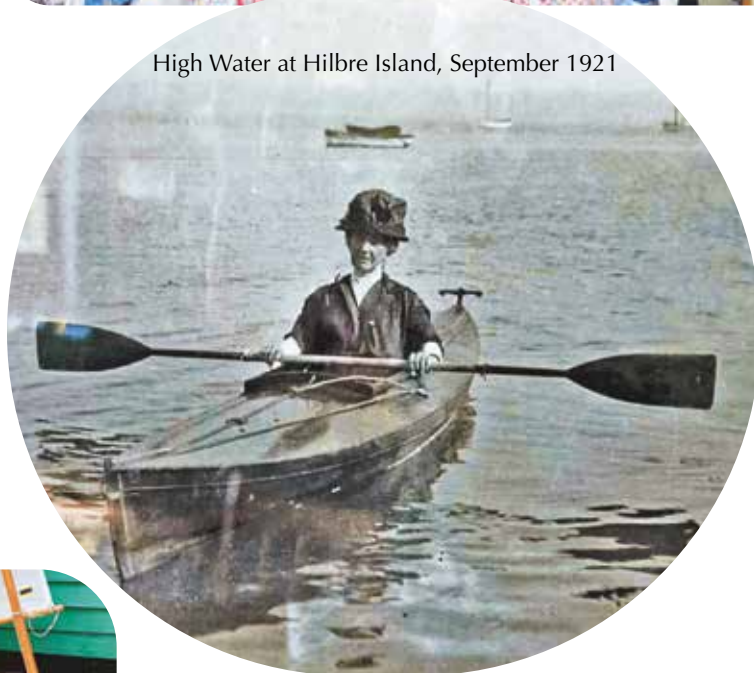
The Mersey Canoe Club blossomed at a time when small light craft were extremely popular in Britain – and elsewhere. The voyages of MacGregor and others became famous, and their books were best sellers. In 1878 Robert Louis Stevenson's first volume, when aged 27, *An Inland Voyage*, was an account of his expedition with a friend from Antwerp to northern France in their sailing kayaks using recently developed double-bladed paddles, inspired by MacGregor's book (1866). This trip was made five years after the MCC was founded.

The MCC would not have been seen as poor relations of the Royal Canoe Club. Merseyside enthusiasts, especially the Birkenhead sailmakers, were admired throughout the land and were responsible for key



Old sailing rigs in the kitchen rafters

High Water at Hilbre Island, September 1921



*Twig*, the big Oughtred MacGregor

developments in the design of these small boats. These days the membership of the MCC is very modest in size, and they prefer it to be so: and no publicity. The MCC is no longer active on the water. They see themselves as custodians of the Club, its traditions and the few boats that live on. Ideas are being aired as to whether their Club records should be published or not. Charles Warren graciously permitted me to write up this account for the Journal despite their reticence and preference for keeping a low profile.



(Above) Paddy Norman's favourite paddling canoe. Mersey Class canoe behind

(Right) If the DCA ever does have a clubhouse we could do a lot worse than building one like this...

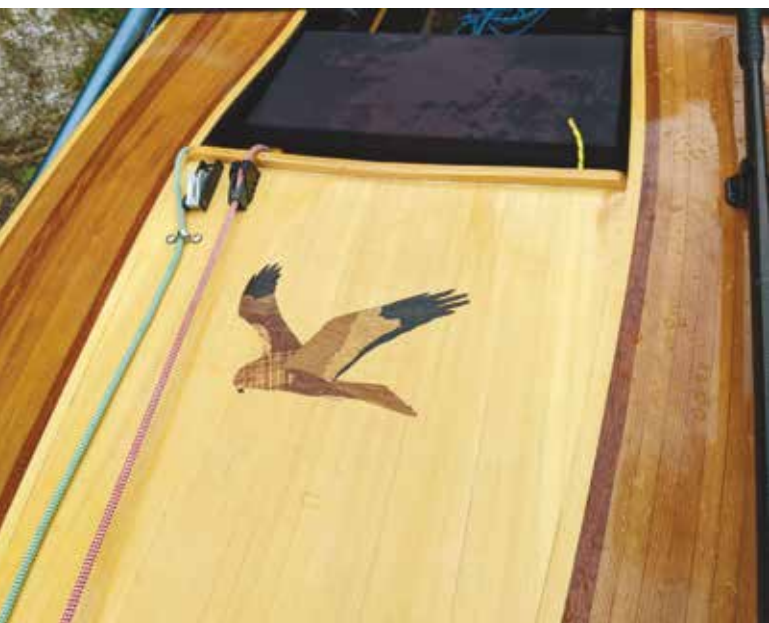


It was interesting to talk to the big group of Dyffryn Conwy Paddlers who made it across for the event – although some were a little late in leaving Hilbre and were neaped before they could reach West Kirby. I know the feeling. They have a considerable online presence which I have enjoyed browsing since our visit.

The two sailing canoes of OSCG members Peter Robinson and Andy Whitham could be seen approaching from a long way off, beating into the robust breeze that had built as the tide rose. Peter has written a detailed account of the trip for the OSCG, which he has transferred to the Song of the Paddle forum. Definitely worth reading.

Peter's cruising boat is also worth looking at; *Sea Harrier* is a thing of beauty; an ethereal creation in varnished wood (left, marquetry design in stern deck).

He and Andy Whitham (sailing a Solway Dory canoe) arrived at the rough little landing place on the landward side of Hilbre, which was something of a lee shore. Peter and Andy had been talking about sailing their canoes out to, or around Hilbre for a year or so. They were invited to come by Charles Warren through the good auspices of Mike Cottam.



Captain Charles Warren's fellow MCC members, who helped him to make us feel so welcome were Paddy Norman, Tony Bibbington and Nigel Sutherst. Chris Woodworth brought one or two friends with him, and of course the Dyffryn Conwy Paddlers had a great turn-out, which swelled our numbers. Joining their annual trip up the Conwy river is an attractive possibility for the future.

The cherry on the cake for me was being introduced by Mike Cottam to the book *Camping Out (1891)* written by Dr JD Hayward, then Rear Commodore of the MCC. *KM*

The OCSG sailing canoes on the rough slip. *Sea Harrier* with blue hull. Keith Muscott (left) with new-found canine pal; Paddy Norman and Mike Cottam (right) standing and helping DCP members to land. As always, the sea was lumpier than it looks.

Photos on this page by Jennifer Heney

**Llyn Tegid / Lake Bala,  
Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th September  
Lyn Bodger**

**The following members participated:**

Mark Bradshaw	Bayraider 20	<i>Franziska</i>
Mike Philips	Crew	<i>Franziska</i>
Phil Barre	Lune Whammel	<i>Luneraker</i>
Lyn and Avril	Bodger Crew	<i>Luneraker</i>
Rob Hyde	Drascombe Coaster	<i>Slow Gin</i>
Martin Wright	Sea Otter 18	<i>Tarka</i>
Marilyn Wright	Crew	<i>Tarka</i>
Jasper Carrot	Drascombe Dabber	<i>Tethera</i>
Nick Vowles	Drascombe Dabber	<i>Marjorie</i>
Sarah Vowles	Crew	<i>Marjorie</i>
Ross Patterson	Mirror	<i>Puff the Magic Dragon</i>
Chris Woodworth	Comet Vera	<i>Aria</i>

It was wonderful to be back together at Bala enjoying each other's company and the hospitality of Bala Sailing Club.

Saturday was a day of generally light airs giving us a gentle cruise from the sailing club as far as Llangower Point where the boats were beached and a very pleasant lunch taken, Phil's new cooking box being much admired.

Saturday evening we enjoyed a meal at our usual venue the Plas yn Dre in Bala.

On Sunday only Jasper, Phil and Ross launched, setting off in light airs. The wind later picked up to the extent that Jasper and Ross found it necessary to reef before beaching up again for lunch.

All in all a very enjoyable weekend in warm, rain-free weather on a beautiful lake. **LB**

*(Top) Avril Bodger in Luneraker (Second) Marjorie and Tarka (Right) Franziska (Far right) Slow Gin (Bottom) Lunch at Llangower Point*



**Derwent Water, Monday September 27 – Sunday  
October 3, Brian McClellan  
Report by Frank Dearden**

**Attending:**

Frank & Margaret Dearden	Tideway	<i>Grace</i>
Brian & Kate McClellan	without boat	
Colin Firth	Torch	<i>Thrift</i>
(Bill Jones's Torch, which is kept at the marina)		
Keith Muscott and Jennifer Heney	Falmouth Bass Boat	<i>Jonathan Seagull</i>

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**Frank Dearden:** Not the best of weeks, in fact more or less a washout. A combination of fuel uncertainty and a bad weather forecast kept the usual suspects away (sensible people).

We dodged about, on foot or by car, between showers and high winds for tea and cakes at Nichol End, Derwent Water Marina and Booths in Keswick. Colin joined the Deardens and Macs for tea/coffee in their respective marina studio apartments. Chat took the edge off sailing frustration.

The only day with a half-decent forecast was Wednesday, a dry and sunny day. Frank and Margaret headed out on *Grace* with a wind speed of 22 mph with gusts of 32 mph. With two reefs in, *Grace* sailed down to St. Herbert's Isle with only a Mirror dinghy in sight. From there on to Otterfield Bay for lunch. The wind had been northwest but after landing it turned north, making our beach a true lee shore. We had constant squalls (so much for the forecast). In a gap of about 20-30 seconds



between gusts we set off paddling out into the lake, whereupon wind and squalls turned to the south. We headed home on a run. Kate, Brian and Colin had walked to Otterfield Bay but missed us.

The terrible weather continued, so on Thursday we went to Carlisle to a dig of a Roman bath-house at Carlisle Cricket Club. Kate and Brian went to the Windermere Boat Museum.

On the Saturday we all met up for lunch at The Chalet café in Portinscale where we enjoyed a really sociable meal with cheerful and friendly service. Rain was thundering down and the marina started to flood. By Sunday the lake had risen so much that there was more than a foot of water between the moored boats and

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(Above) Skiddaw seen from Otterfield Bay  
(Below) Recovering *Grace* from the 'boatpark' at the Marina: Kath McClellan, Margaret & Frank Dearden  
(both by Brian McClellan)





(Above) Saturday night's accumulation of rainwater in the boat cover. (Below) Rainbow between Skiddaw and the marina, taken from the pontoon at Nichol End  
(both by Jennifer Heney)

boats on trailers on the other side of the access tracks. Fortunately *Grace* had been pulled out onto higher ground, then later pulled down into the flood, thence to the dry car park where we could drop the mast in comfort. Relatively speaking.

We decided to head for home. Kate and Brian were off on a visit to Colin's house for coffee before leaving the marina on Monday morning.

**(Brian:** *At Colin's we had our usual DCA sailing chat but it also gave us the opportunity to remember Jane with Colin and some of the happy sailing times we had together.*)

**Keith:** We arrived on Thursday at the lovely campsite by Braithwaite, which is too far from the lake to commute on foot wearing sailing gear, so we travelled north in two vehicles. Leonie Griffin and Janice Kerrisk had planned to join us, to crew in the Bass Boat and resume their longstanding acquaintance with it. They intended to share a tent. Had they done so, they would still be floating in it down the River Derwent to the Solway.

Our campervan remained on site and we regularly checked out the situation at the lake by car. It was a weekend of floods that increased at a Biblical rate, matched by squalls that kept pace in velocity and frequency. The forecasts failed to keep pace with this serious deterioration, though. Rain was heavy and continuous, and finally flooded the CCC site at Keswick as well as rendering our two main points of access to the lake practically unusable, except by kayaks.

At Nichol End we sampled their mega-scones and coffee again after a two-year absence, in the shelter of marquees set up on the terrace. Safety precautions were extensive, as the proprietor had just contracted Covid (but had still discussed mooring and launching with us via email before we'd left home).

We arranged to launch the Falmouth Bass Boat there and would have tied up to a pontoon in an instant if the conditions had shown any improvement at all. The shoreline staff knew this was an unlikely possibility by this time, as the steep access at Nichol End was looking risky with mud everywhere. Derwent Water Marina was our fall-back option and we came to the same arrangement with the staff there (for the same price, incidentally). As Frank has mentioned, it was not long before the rising lake made the marina a no-go area for boats, too, though a small group of adults and a larger group of children with instructors got out in kayaks; by this time I was wishing we had brought our inflatable Gumotex Thaya.

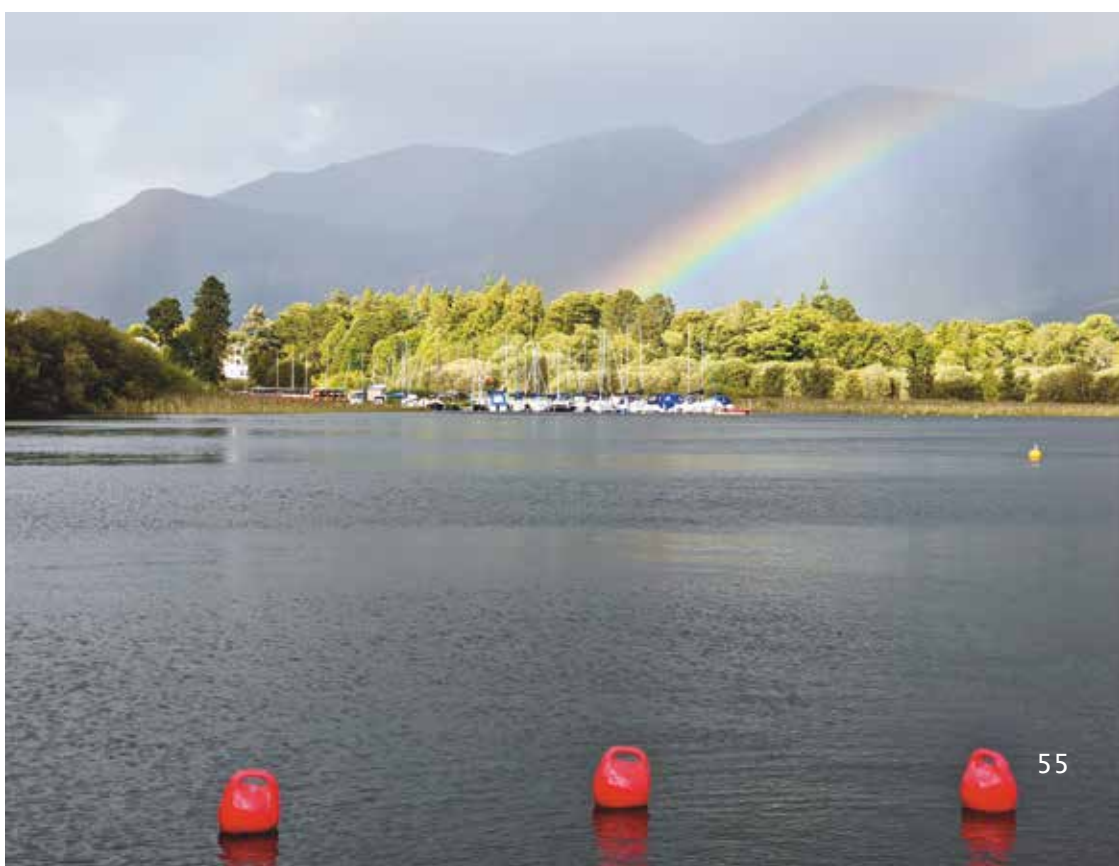
The Bass Boat on its trailer needed constant baling even though it was well protected – the cover acquired ridiculous weights of water that pooled in it in no time.

The crunch came on Sunday. There were one or two sunny periods, but the forecast was bad, so we took advantage of an early morning delivery of fuel at a garage on the Keswick road and lit out for home.

One notable aspect of all this doomsday meteorology was the persistence of rainbows, appearing every time the clouds opened fractionally. I narrowly escaped violence when I persisted in quoting,

'My heart leaps up when I behold  
A rainbow in the sky...'; etc, etc.

They increased in frequency and beauty, culminating in a huge arch that straddled us precisely on the road, just a couple of miles from home – even though the weather was much better on Anglesey, with only a few heavy showers.



## South West

### Tamar Rally

7/8 August - Kingsmill Creek, John Perry

#### Attending:

Alastair Law Paradox miniature cabin boat

Mary Dooley Mirror dinghy

John and Josephine 15-foot home made sailing dinghy

Matthew Buykx Silhouette small bilge keel yacht.

(Also John Lidstone met us on shore at Saltash but decided not to go sailing.)

**J**OHAN AND JOSEPHINE MET WITH MARY AND ALASTAIR at Saltash on Saturday morning but decided to postpone sailing until the afternoon when the rain was forecast to ease off and the tide would be flooding.

Alastair had launched the previous day and spent the night a little way up river, his boat was now alongside the Saltash public pontoon. Alastair had agreed an extension to the two hour time limit for the pontoon so that he could stay until Mary, John and Josephine had launched their boats. Leaving Saltash, we sailed up river to Cargreen or thereabouts before turning back down river to Kingsmill Creek, the advertised rally destination.

It's a pretty creek and well sheltered up at Moditonum quay, especially with the westerly wind we had that day. As we cooked supper on board our boats Matthew arrived with his newly aquired Silhouette bilge keel yacht. We then all walked to the Rising Sun where we had an undercover outdoor table for drinks (no food at this pub). Returning to the quay our boats were comfortably dried out on firm shingly mud with lines to the quay and anchors out in the creek to keep them off the stonework.

On Sunday Mary hauled out her Mirror dinghy at Saltash and Matthew returned to his base up the river Lynher whereas Alastair, John and Josephine sailed



down river to Edgcombe Park, landing at the Barn Pool. This is a popular anchorage for yachts and is sheltered from prevailing winds but as a landing place for dinghies one has to be careful about boulders strewn across the beach and also mindful of the wash that ships can make on the beach since the shipping channel in and out of Devonport curves quite close to the shore here.

We found a patch of beach free of boulders and left our boats dry out over the low tide period while we took a short stroll through the beautiful formal gardens to the orangery restaurant/tea-shop. Cream tea in the orangery did give us a problem – the scones, warm from the oven, were much too large and there was far too much strawberry jam and cream which meant that instead of taking an intended walk up the hill to the top of the park we lazed by the shore until our boats re-floated. We then had a quick and breezy sail back to Saltash to haul out our boats. *JP*

(Top) Matthew takes Josephine ashore in his newly built tender. Not yet painted inside!

(Below) DCA boats at Moditonum Quay



## Fowey Rally, 26/27 June, John Perry

### Present:

#### Reuben Thompson -

Self-designed/built 18-foot ketch (or yawl?). The small mizzen is ahead of the rudder but behind the tiller, tiller and rudder being connected through a linkage.

#### Alastair Law

Paradox miniature cabin boat, roller-blind rig.

#### John Lidstone

Outrigger boat, Bermudian una rig.

#### Matt and Rachael Fedden with dog Gertie.

16-foot Zulu, traditional style double-ended boat with dipping lug rig.

#### John Perry and Josephine Street

Self designed/built 15-footer with gunter rig that becomes Bermudian with shortened sail.

**R**EBUBEN SAILED FROM FALMOUTH, HIS HOME PORT, John, Josephine and Alastair launched at Caffa Mill slipway, John Lidstone at Penmarlam (Mixtow Marine) and Matt and Rachael sailed from their house on the waterside of one of the creeks off Fowey River.

John Lidstone reported that Mixtow Marine in Penmarlam Creek is a viable alternative to launching at Caffa Mill, where parking can be difficult or even impossible in the summer. The charge to launch at Mixtow Marine includes parking, toilets and showers as well as use of an all-tide concrete slipway – and there is a cafe at the top of that slipway.



Alastair, Reuben, John, Josephine in the boat, Matt & Rachel Fedden. In Polridden Cove

On the Saturday morning we all gathered at this cafe to discuss plans. The published first choice of destination was Polkerris but since we had northeasterly winds this weekend, increasing to F5+ on Sunday, this could have meant a difficult return on Sunday. Instead we all sailed to Polridden cove on Saturday. This is a delightful sandy cove about a mile along the coast from



Matt and Rachel's 16-foot Zulu, with dipping lug rig

the Fowey entrance. Although the breeze was blowing into the cove we found it calm enough to land on the sand and we stayed there over the low point of the tide, having lunch and also standing in the water chatting – see picture.

Matt and Rachael left us after lunch to take Gertie for a walk and to sail back to their house, while the rest of us headed back into Fowey and on up Fowey river. Initially we were thinking of Golant but then we continued up beyond the pretty waterside church at St Winnow and into the narrow upper reaches, lured perhaps by Alastair's promise that we would find a fish and chip shop at Lostwithiel, which is the head of navigation, except possibly for canoes. There are small craft tied up by the grassy river bank in the centre of this small town but to get there would have meant passing under a railway bridge (recently rebuilt) and at least one of our boats had a tall mast that was not all that easy to lower. Instead we stopped at the long concrete-faced quay on the west side of the river a few hundred yards down from the centre of Lostwithiel.

Presumably this quay was once used for loading china clay onto river barges; even Wikipedia does not tell much but the track alongside the quay shows traces of being a railway siding. These days the china clay goes by railway to Fowey where it is loaded by complicated-looking machinery directly onto sea-going ships.

Alastair and John Lidstone's boats dried out that night.

At the quay just below Lostwithiel







Reuben in Fowey Harbour. (Opposite) John sailing Geese

Alastair said they dried on level cobblestones which presumably were put there for commercial vessels to dry out on. Prodding with an oar suggested that the river bed under our boat was hard and somewhat uneven so I was hoping not to have to get up to move the boat in the early hours but I think we just stayed afloat, as I think did Reuben.

As we queued outside the fish and chip shop in Lostwithiel on Saturday evening it started to rain and that continued on and off through the night then on Sunday the rain poured down for much of the day. I am

Reuben sailing into Fowey Harbour



not sure how strong the wind was at sea. Sailing down the river it was blustery and coming from all different directions. Reuben initially said that he would sail as far as Polridden and maybe out to Gribbin Head to assess the conditions at sea, then later he sent a message to say that he had decided to carry on to Falmouth which he reached in three and a half hours from Polridden, sailing with just jib and mizzen. The remainder of our party gathered again under the tent at the cafe by the Mixtow Marine slipway before making our ways home.

We had a disparate collection of boats at this rally, none of them standard class dinghies and at least four out of the five home built, also there was a different kind of rig on each boat. Reuben's 18-foot yawl is low and narrow but seems adequately stable and it looks beautiful. This weekend he was mostly sailing it with just the jib and mizzen but when he did briefly hoist the mainsail off Polridden Cove it was clear that it is a quick boat. It is strip-planked with decks of light planking over plywood.



It has a spinnaker and trapeze wires which Reuben refrained from using this weekend; perhaps he did not want to leave the rest of us too far behind.

This is the second boat Reuben has designed and built and he has ideas for more. We also had John Lidstone's *Geese* which has been laid up for 10 years during which time John has owned a trimaran which he has now sold. He has given *Geese* a refit and it looks splendid in glossy white polyurethane. It is an outrigger-stabilised boat, but not a proa because the bow is always at the same end and I am not sure it could be called an outrigger canoe since it does not have a canoe stern. John has ideas to make it into a small 'fold up' trimaran which would require new floats and cross beams. *JP*

**Truro Rally, July 10th,  
Alastair Law**

**Attending:**

John Hughes	Mirror	<i>Yasmi</i>
Alastair Law	Paradox	<i>Little Jim</i>

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**F**AIRLY EARLY ON THE PROGNOSIS FOR THIS RALLY was not good. One by one the members who would normally be expected to attend cried off with feeble excuses, like their daughter was expecting a baby or it was their wedding anniversary. In the week leading up to the rally only 4 boats had confirmed their intention of attending. Then, within 2 days of the rally starting, one called off with an injury and another with a family crisis.

So 2 boats assembled on the slipway at Truro on a damp Friday evening. The drive down had been very slow for both of us, an accident giving me 2 hours rest, stationary, on the A30. But the launch went smoothly and we sailed down river to anchor out of the wind about a mile from the slip. John had just got his new tent erected when the rain started in earnest. He was happy to report a generally dry night.

The slipway at Boscawen Park, on the east side of the river is only wet about 2 hours either side of high water, but it is free to use with free parking. the surface is quite good, and it is quiet, except when the canoe club is having a meeting.

On Saturday morning, with the rain now stopped, but with no wind, we set off down river, stopping for refreshment at the Trelissick House National Trust tea room. (One of the best cream teas I have ever had.) The NT has very thoughtfully installed a pontoon for small boats like us to tie up to, so it would be churlish not to stop here.

The rain started again, in a half-hearted way, as we walked back to the boats. We carried on down with the ebb, and a bit more wind, into Carrick Roads where we decided some shelter from the rain would be a good idea, so we stopped at Loe beach, where there is a café. Imagine our horror when, after spending some time securing our craft, we discovered that the café was eat-out only and we had to consume our bacon baps standing in the rain.

After a beat to seaward across the open expanse of Carrick Roads we eventually turned and ran with the flood back up river. We lost the wind once past Turnaware Point and reverted to the oars again. As the rain had eased we stopped at the NT pontoon and walked up to the cafe again.

We decided we should really spend the night at the rally destination, just by the slip, in case anyone else should decide to join us. So we headed on up, in intermittent drizzle and anchored off the beach. There is a cafe in the park (eat-out only) so we had a drink on a picnic bench while optimistically waiting for someone else to arrive. No-one did. So we retreated to our boats for an early night, listening to the rain.



John's new tent being tested in the incessant rain.

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The morning forecast was for rain all day so John sensibly lifted out and went home. I, after being traumatised by the traffic on the way down, had realised that there was some sort of football match being played on Sunday evening, which might mean the roads would be much quieter. So I spent the day drifting down the river with the ebb, in the rain, anchoring in a quiet corner for lunch, in the rain, and eventually drifting back up with the flood, in the rain.

Just below the slipway at Truro there is a flood defence with a gate to keep the water out of the town. immediately below this is a waiting pontoon, in case you are shut out. This is very convenient as you can land here while there is still no water at the slip, and go ashore to prepare the trailer. Care must be taken, however, as on spring tides (HW in the evening) there is a significant current through the gate. If you miss the pontoon you would not be able to get back.

I hitched onto this pontoon and, in the rain, prepared the boat and trailer for when the water was high enough. The haul-out went smoothly and I am pleased to report that the roads were unusually quiet. *AL*

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Rally venue. It is just about to rain...



Stoke Gabriel, 18/19 September, John Perry

Present:

**Steve Goodchild (Co-ordinator)**

8-foot home built strip-planked rowing boat

**Alastair Law**

Paradox miniature cabin boat, roller-blind rig

**Matt and Rachael Fedden**, with dog Gertie

16-foot Cornish Coble with lug rig

**John Perry and Josephine Street**

Home designed/made 15-foot sliding seat rowing boat.

**Neil and Win** Albacore dinghy

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**A**LASTAIR, JOHN & JOSEPHINE AND MATT & RACHAEL all chose to launch at the slipway near the rowing club at the end of Steamer Quay Road, Totnes. This is now my first choice of slipway on the Dart since there is plenty of car park space close by and car park charges can be added each day using a phone app. It is just about an all-tide slipway although a bit muddy and slippery at the bottom of the tide.

Arriving at the Stoke Gabriel Boating Association site (SGBA) we met our rally coordinator Steve Goodchild who had his beautifully home built rowing boat alongside the club pontoon. Steve introduced us to the Commodore of the SGBA who showed us around the new clubhouse which is tucked into a former quarry and accessible by a footpath from Stoke Gabriel village or at low tide by walking along the foreshore (but no road access). This is an active club offering a range of sailing courses and also the club itself owns a variety of boats (more than fifty of them!) which are freely available for the members to use. Indeed, at the time of our visit they were just launching and trying out the latest club owned craft – one of two giant eight-person stand up paddle boards that have recently been donated to the club.

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Steve Goodchild rowing *Baby Barnacle* to Dittisham



DCA Fleet lying alongside at Stoke Gabriel Boating Association

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Steve's rowing boat was built as a 'covid project' and as a tender to his home-built Selway-Fisher designed Stornaway 16 sailing dinghy, both craft being strip-planked and finished with biax glass sheathing and many coats of shiny varnish. There are three small wheels under the hull of the tender allowing it to be rolled around on shore. One wheel is built into a small skeg at the stern and the other two are on the bilges amidships with streamlined fairings ahead and behind them.

Although it is a wide boat for its short length it rows well so the wheels cannot be causing much water drag. Matt and Rachael Fedden have recently acquired their fibreglass Cornish Coble to replace their Zulu double-ended lugger. The Cornish Coble has the advantage of a centreboard and dries out fairly level for camping on board whereas the Zulu had quite a deep hull and no centreboard. The Fedden's new boat does look to be a practical and robust cruising dinghy.

After a leisurely coffee in the upstairs lounge of the SGBA we went for an afternoon row/sail to Dittisham. Neil and Win left us behind as they returned to their base at Dittisham Sailing Club, their Albacore racing dinghy proved to be faster to windward than the rest of our fleet, including our sliding seat row boat (it was not a race though!). On our return to Stoke Gabriel we had an evening meal at the waterside cafe at Stoke Gabriel quay.

We had a leisurely Sunday morning at the SGBA then took the afternoon tide back up to Totnes. On the way up river John, Josephine and Alastair landed at Sharpham upper quay and went exploring up the permissive footpath that leads up the hill from the quay. We found that this path takes you up to the Sharpham estate vineyard and cheesery. Here they sell their products from the site and they also have a cafe for visitors so we stopped for tea and cake before continuing to Totnes.

JP



# East Coast

## Crouch Rally, 19th June, Doug MacEwan plus two more

### Attending :

Dave Jennings	Roamer	Jessica
Richard Wilde	Welsford Navigator	Unity
Doug MacEwan & Simon Burkey	Essex Smacks Boat	Maggie Lou
John Waters	Heron	Suzy
Jim Wolf, & Pete Garrod	pocket cruiser	Copernicus
Gerald Turner and Mark Smith	Wayfarer	Merganser
Peter Hurlock	pocket cruiser	Heron

The narratives are by three of us, photographs were pooled by all of us, and the video was posted by Simon:  
<https://youtu.be/lfcmY5AI-3k>

**Doug MacEwan:** 'Can I stop overnight at the club on Friday before the rally?' was the request from Dave as there was a 07:40 HW at Hullbridge, so it was agreed readily enough.

The 'XCWeather' forecast for the Crouch Rally on the Saturday was northerly going easterly for light to moderate breezes, but deteriorating overnight as a line squall ( East Coast parlance for a cold front) would bring 9 mm of rain overnight with thundery squalls of force 6 to 7 Beaufort Scale . Then no wind but rain on the Sunday. Three of the SWFYC members who were to have joined us in dinghies changed their minds to sail in their pocket cruisers

Wisely the consensus of opinion was to return after a daysail to the security of South Woodham Ferrers Yacht club for Saturday night, with the option of recovering the boats to the shelter on land, then being flexible for the Sunday. In fact the exceptional heavy rain forecast was reduced considerably overnight.



Before we set off: Richard in his recently completed *Unity*, Dave and *Jessica* in the background

We were the only ones on the river when we launched, the breeze which had promised to be northerly and a beam reach, was in fact northeasterly, but enough to

give us way through the hundred or so cruiser moorings at Hullbridge. We threaded our way down to the ancient smuggling pool of Brandy Hole, where in the olden times, illegal contraband brought from France was dumped overboard in barrels weighted down by salt, to be collected later when the salt dissolved and the barrels rose. The name has stayed ever since.



Taken from South Woodham Ferrers Yacht Club, looking across to Hullbridge

Once past Brandy Hole, we turned into deep water in long and short tacks, sailed down river past the entrances of two creeks to pass through the large expanse of Fambridge moorings with big expensive yachts. In contrast there were inshore a couple of picturesque Thames Sailing Barges awaiting passengers. On the port side we passed the old Crimean hospital of Florence Nightingale's day, which now houses North Fambridge Yacht Club which is over 100 years old. A few of the yachts were stirring at their moorings ready to drop away on the tide as we passed by.

Once clear of the moorings the old SWFYC Heron took the lead of our small flotilla. This is an old battered club boat with ancient sails; it surprised us how it sailed so well. To add injury to our esteem it returned to the back of the fleet then came through again. We were a motley assortment of boats but all of us were going well and enjoying the conditions.



Two of the flotilla, taken from *Unity*

The original plan had been to go down to the junction of the River Roach for a lunch stop, but it was then decided to beach at Creeksea first, to await Mark and Gerald in their *Wayfarer Merganser* coming from Paglesham on the River Roach.



*Maggie Lou*

The present site of Creeksea Sailing Club was where Motor Torpedo Boats were built in the second World War, which was why the slipway was originally built. Although there are some DCA members based at Creeksea SC none were with us today. We were, however, curious to see the new concrete slipway extension and a new larger race control building built since 2020.

There were some spots of rain as we landed, which confirmed the decision to stop, although once beached the rain stopped! The beach consisted of a mixture of sand with mud and was fairly firm underfoot, so we ran the boats up to dry out at about half an hour before Low Water Burnham. We trekked up to the dinghy park but there were only two young ladies drinking Prosecco on the balcony. The rest of the club seemed shut up.



Boats at Creeksea with the pocket cruisers just off the beach

After about an hour we manhandled the boats back into the water in what was now a easterly Force 3 increasing, and about an hour of flooding tide. We had decided to carry on downriver through Burnham to see whether we could make the River Roach about three miles further on. The attraction was to show Dave and Richard the Branklet navigation buoy, a preferred channel marker of a red port hand buoy with a green middle section.

Although we soon tacked down to Essex Marina, past the tall cranes of Baltic Wharf it became obvious that we were all struggling to make meaningful progress against the second hour of tide in the Force 3 breeze. We struggled to make decent headway over the tide. It didn't take much persuading to round up and sail back with a now moderate Force 4 under our sterns.



*Unity*

A point of wonderment for some of us on the return was how *Unity* was able to sail so far by the lee, only gybing when most of us would have been forced to gybe far far earlier!

During the return journey we were hotly pursued by Mark and Gerald in the *Wayfarer*. I used the GPS on my phone and found we were doing 4.6 knots at times. Finally we rounded up off the SWFYC slipway at 18:00.



*Jessica* at Black Point

**Richard Wilde:** For me, this was the first time on the water since October, so I was looking forward to catching up with the DCA East Coast group and sailing once again. I had used lockdown to 'finish' the new boat so there was lots to learn and plenty of testing to be done. It was very useful to be able to tap into the experience on hand with some great advice and suggestions, thank you all.

We launched just after HW on Saturday morning with

the forecast of a gentle F2/3 northerly, moving easterly later in the day. The tide was in our favour as we sailed down river towards Creeksea. On the way, I discovered the depth limits when I stayed on a tack for a bit too long and briefly touched the ground. Lesson learnt. I re-joined the group as we beached at Creeksea Sailing Club for lunch. It was now LW and we continued downriver to meet up with Mark and Gerald in their Wayfarer.

Eventually the tide beat us back and we turned for a downwind run all the way back to South Woodham Ferrers where we camped for the night.

By Sunday morning the wind had completely disappeared, and as we watched the Wayfarer drifting away from the slipway, we made the decision not to launch again. Another brilliant DCA rally, catching up with friends, meeting new people, and thanks to Dave and Doug for organising everything.

**Mark Smith:** Gerald and I sailed *Merganser* round to South Woodham Ferrers this weekend. We left Paglesham 10.00 Saturday and by 1pm we were in Burnham enjoying a full-English at the Quay Café (Bistro!).

Around 3pm we continued up the Crouch to meet the other DCA boats off Creeksea. And from there a gentle run up the Crouch to South Woodham Ferrers where we camped and were able to use the club house facilities. Sunday we set off at 9am just before HW in almost no wind but this filled in and by 12 we were back in Burnham for lunch (aka waiting for the tide to turn) and Paglesham by 4 where we had tea waiting for tide to reach the mooring. Pleased to report that the



*Maggie Lou* off Creeksea



Wayfarer *Merganser* moored off the sailing club

thunderstorms, rain, drizzle, etc., forecast and much discussed in the clubhouse, never materialised.

Thanks to Dave for organising the rally and to Doug for use of the Clubhouse toilets. *MS*

River Crouch (*below*). Photograph taken over South Woodham Ferrers, looking east. *Open source — Wikimedia*



# The Third Charente-Maritime Rally

(postponed from 2020)

## Report by Miles & David

Sunday 5th September to Friday 10th September 2021



Anthony Chadwick's sketch of his boat *Sarum* (not *Salum*)

### Taking part:

David Priestley  
Niky Wooderson  
Miles Dent  
Patrick Hay  
Vincent Lorilleux  
Frédéric Lopez  
Anthony Chadwick  
Mark Smith  
David Nutt  
Lyn Dent and Pattie Nutt

Cornish Coble  
«  
Whisstock Cutter  
Tricorn dinghy  
Major \*  
Jouet 17 Foxtrot  
Zef dinghy Mk.3  
Crew in *Water Rat* and *Valentine IV*  
Crew in *Water Rat*  
Shore based support crew

*Valentine IV*  
«  
*The Water Rat*  
*Salvo*  
*Le Major*  
*Marc'h Mor*  
*Sarum*

\* Chantier Silvant, Brittany.

**T**HIS RALLY WAS A LONG TIME IN THE PLANNING. We started in January 2020 but the 2020 rally had to be postponed of course. When, in 2021, the Semaine du Golfe was cancelled as well we decided to try to go ahead with it this year. In the end no boats came from the UK which was completely understandable but one brave UK-based member was determined to come – thank you for making the effort, Mark.

Five boats arrived to launch at La Rochelle on Sunday afternoon. Two British expats from the Charente-Maritime, Miles and David; one from the Pas de Calais, Patrick Hay in *Salvo*; and one from the Mayenne region, Anthony Chadwick, in *Sarum*. The fifth was Frédéric Lopez, in *Marc'h Mor* (Breton for Seahorse) from the Morbihan. Frédéric is a new, French, DCA member (number 4,040) who contacted us on the 24th August just a few days before the rally. He had just received his membership from David Morton with a PDF version of the latest journal and seen the notice about the rally. We were so pleased that he could join us.

### Day 1. Monday 6th September HW 0510 and 1720. LW 1111

#### La Rochelle to Le Douhet, Ile d'Oléron. About 12M

So, early on Monday morning, despite pretty grim forecasts of thunderstorms and high winds, five boats set off from the huge Marina at Les Minimes.

Outside the port we met Vincent in *Le Major*, one of our local VAP friends (Voile et Aviron dans les Pertuis), who had started from Port Neuf just across the bay from Les Minimes. With a gentle breeze from ENE we had an easy run on a course of about 200° making allowance

for the ebb tide. We had a good view of the Ile d'Aix and later Fort Boyard on the port bow. The breeze became even lighter as we approached the port, calling for some rowing and motoring. David and Niky later told us that it was at this point that they saw a powerful black RIB coming fast towards them. As it drew alongside they saw that it wasn't the Gendarmerie de la Mer but their next-door neighbour, Jean-Luc, out for a day's fishing with his friend Kristof! Small world or what? We noted how Vincent, who had been worried about being the only 'Frenchie' in the fleet – his words not mine – found himself sailing alongside Frédéric, having found not only another 'Frenchie', albeit a Breton, but another recently retired career soldier. So, no doubt, lots to talk about. A new friendship being made – really nice.

David Priestley Sketch Map I



It was a beautiful sunny day and the water crystal clear in the Anse de la Maleconche. The bottom was clearly visible at three to four metres. Getting into the Port du Douhet is complicated for keel boats who must follow a narrow dredged channel through a vast area of sand that dries at LW, but it was easy for us with our shallow draught boats and the clear water. There is a sill at the entrance to the port but with centreboards up we were able to enter by 1430 for a late lunch. The young female Chef du Port allocated us places all on the same pontoon.

A sixth sense led us to the nearest bar for life-saving cold beers; it had been a hot day. This part of the day became a habit in every port! David, Niky and Mark found camping places in the dunes behind the port while the rest of us prepared our beds on board. Dinner in a Breton style Crêperie was enjoyed by all, not just Frédéric. The only disappointment of the evening was the news that Peter and Brigitte Peetz and their friend Birgit, who were due to join the fleet at the Pont de Ré the next day in their boat *Pa Stranden* would not now be taking part in the rally. One of the crew was unwell which was a shame, particularly for Miles who knows them well.

**Day 2. Tuesday 7th September**  
**HW 0541 and 1751. LW 1150**  
**Le Douhet to La Flotte, Ile de Ré. About 15M**

We woke to a strong SE breeze with halyards rattling against the aluminium masts of some of the bigger boats in the port. After breakfast on the pontoon everyone put in a reef or two and headed out. *Salvo* had been the quickest boat yesterday and today was soon out of sight. 'I just can't sail slowly,' Patrick said later. We all headed somewhere between 0° and 30° with our destination, the huge Ile de Ré viaduct, always in sight just beyond the commercial port of La Pallice.



David and Niky in *Valentine IV*

forestay. Luckily we were not too far from La Rochelle so he calmly took down his mast and motored into the port to assess the damage. I know we all felt deflated to be losing him so early but pleased that he could at least get home safely. More of this later.

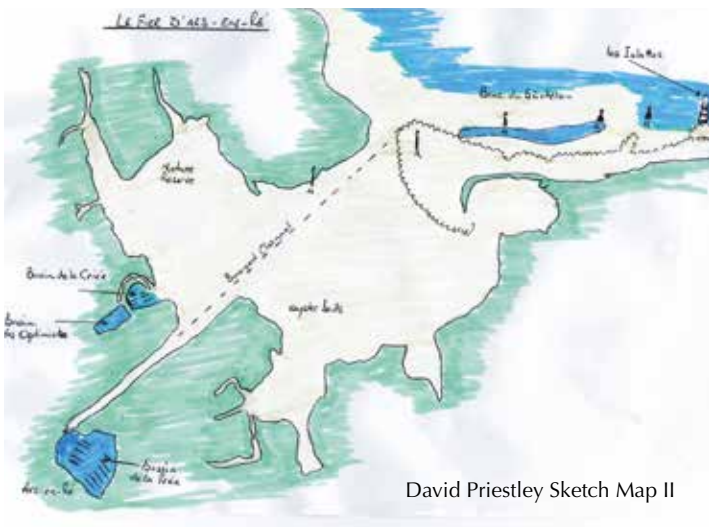


Marc'h Mor, from *Sarum*

We wished him well and continued through the bridge and on towards La Flotte, another beautiful little drying harbour on the Ile de Ré. There was plenty of wind to take us over the young flood. We all anchored or picked up one of the 'bouée d'attente' in the bay to wait for enough water to enter the port at about 1500. We quickly found the nearest bar for our customary beer and later went back there for dinner.

Our boat tents were erected early as rain was forecast and David, Niky and Mark put their tents up in the Capitainerie courtyard. The 'sanitaires' – toilets, showers, etc. – at each port were excellent and the port fees very reasonable at between 8 and 14€.

We were back in the restaurant for dinner and were



David Priestley Sketch Map II

The wind gradually backed from SE to E and then to ENE so that we were close-hauled to leave the lighthouse of Chauveau to port. As we approached the lighthouse, Vincent radioed that he had a catastrophic failure of his





Anchored on the Banc de Bucheron just as it's covering.

just finishing our apéritifs about 8 o'clock when Vincent came strolling along the quay to join us. The cheers that rang out drew some disapproving looks from some of the other customers. He had repaired his mast, recharged the batteries for his electric motor and followed us through the bridge and up the coast to the port! A really heroic effort which we all appreciated as we spent a very pleasant evening together cementing new friendships.

The rain and thunderstorms that had been forecast for the night passed by harmlessly a few miles away.

### Day 3. Wednesday 8th. September

HW 0612 and 1823. LW 1227

#### La Flotte to Ars-en-Ré. About 10M

We met another small boat sailor and potential DCA member, Malcolm Brewin, who had also camped in the Capitainerie courtyard after sailing over from the mainland. We promised to contact him at the end of the rally and keep him informed of any future events.

After breakfast on the quay we left the port at about 0830 heading up the coast towards Ars-en-Ré with some help from the ebb tide and a nice breeze from the SW that soon dropped away. When it returned it was mostly on the nose. So lots of hard tacking up past the 'capital' of the island, St. Martin. It was a long haul up to and around the N cardinal of Les Islattes. There is a narrow channel between it and the rocks that extend out from



Port of St Martin

the shore but nobody risked it, all preferring to leave it to port. Some of us motor-sailed the last bit and then anchored on a beach for a rest, a bite of lunch and a beer (thanks Vincent). 'The cow's tail' – The Water Rat – doggedly continued tacking and eventually overtook the anchored fleet.

Having passed the tall red post (see sketch map of entrance to Ars-en-Ré) we turned to port and aimed for the famous, black-topped Ars church spire. We all continued up through the Fier d'Ars with the rising tide producing a current of three to four knots in the buoyed channel. Frédéric had a problem with his motor and Anthony went back to find him and tow him in. Then into the very lovely, old inner port where we had reserved places; we tied up and paid our dues. Next, inevitably, we found our way to a bar where the 'shore based support crew' who had arrived by car were already installed. Some of us had booked into a local B & B for the two-night stay in Ars but David and Niky were determined to eat on board at least once so headed back to the boats. After a welcome shower, they joined Vincent, Frédéric and Anthony for apéritifs on the pontoon and supper on *Valentine IV*. Then back to the B & B for a decadent night's sleep in a real bed.

La Flotte at night



### Day 4. Thursday 9th September

HW 0644 and 1856. LW 1306

#### Day sail. About 18M

Niky had decided that the attraction of a three-girl day hopping between cafés and shops was too difficult to resist so she joined the 'shore based support crew' for the day. Mark joined David as crew in *Valentine IV*. Unfortunately Mark was nowhere to be seen so Niky went to find him. His excuse when found was that the alarm on his watch was still on UK time – a likely story! David N joined *Water Rat* as crew for two days. As it turned out, Niky's decision was a good one. She would not have enjoyed the conditions that we encountered



Our boats in Ars-en-Ré:  
*Valentine IV, Salvo, Sarum, Marc'h Mor,  
Le Major, The Water Rat.*

later in the day and David was pleased to have Mark's knowledge and experience on board.

Six boats started just before 1000 with the intention of sailing N towards La Tranche on the Vendée coast. After rounding the last Bucheron buoy, but with a fairly strong wind from the SW/SSW, we decided to abandon this plan after a discussion on the radio. The worry was that although we could easily get there, it might be difficult to get back if the wind strengthened as forecast.

So with everyone's agreement (thanks to VHF channel 72) we aborted the crossing to La Tranche and diverted down the coast to St. Martin. Arriving there around lunchtime three boats moored to the buoys outside the port while the other three: *Le Major, Marc'hMor and Sarum* went in and moored to the holding pontoon just inside the outer wall of the port where they took malicious pleasure in waving their beers at us from the ramparts (whatever happened to solidarity among sailors?).

*Valentine IV, Water Rat and Salvo* started for 'home' while the others were still enjoying themselves in St. Martin. It was to be a very testing sail tacking back against a strong W wind (the Chef du port later said B5 gusting to 6) but with a little help from the tide. David was pleased to have Mark's know-how but his hat again needed rescuing. The others started soon afterwards. Several boats 'found the bottom' at different times – some on rock and some on sand. Patrick was the first into the channel inside the Banc de Bucheron but then hit the sandy bottom quite hard and was taking a break before going any further when *Valentine IV* caught up with him. After a long, hard but successful slog *Water Rat* ran aground in the Fier d'Ars just before the channel narrows to go into the port. The skipper had to 'go over the side' to push her off.

**Day 5. Our last day, Friday 9th September  
HW 0717 and 1931. LW 1346  
Ars-en-Ré to Les Minimes. About 17M.**

After we had dried out the boats from the overnight rain we set off at about 1000 on our return leg to La Rochelle – some 23 miles. We were so lucky with the weather. Although rain, and even thunderstorms, had been forecast our wet weather gear remained unused and the forecast for the day was warm with a good B3/4 from the NW. Initially the wind was very light so getting down the channel and then past the Bucheron buoys was easy but rather slow.

The plan was to make the Pont de Ré by 1400 soon after LW. As we passed Les Islattes the wind started to increase and by the time we were passing St. Martin and La Flotte we had a B4/5 with quite a swell developing and agitated conditions caused by the west wind over the ebbing tide.



The last couple of miles to the bridge was a very hard sail, constantly worrying about the possibility of gybing and fighting the tiller while surfing down the swell. Anthony later told us that his rudder stock started to split but lasted until he got through the bridge. We all went through within about 15 minutes of 1400 as planned and once through, the swell reduced and we were able to bear away to starboard reducing the risk of a gybe. The sail back around the commercial port and headland was fine with a beam wind and not too gusty.

**Here are Anthony's notes about these last two days:  
Thursday 9th**

The plan was to cross to the mainland and visit La Tranche sur Mer on the Vendée coast. However, the wind started to freshen and threatened to be vicious, which it was even when we changed our plan and visited St. Martin de Ré. This was one of the places from where prisoners condemned to the penal colony of French Guyana were shipped. It would seem that the famous Papillon (the real life person) was among them. Most of the barrack buildings where the guards lived have been converted into hotels, shops and restaurants. It was an interesting visit as we left our boats in the port. The passage back to Ars was very hard. I had to reef my sail lest my mast broke; it was already bending under the strain. The following sea made hard work for the rudder. After the N cardinal we had to close haul and tacking was impossible without getting into irons. I motored in. A man has to know his limits, as Clint Eastwood said in his films. The meal at the restaurant was most welcome.

**Friday 10th**

We returned to La Rochelle and our cars and trailers. We sailed with a following wind but against the current. The chop was brutal for a small boat and made helming

very hard. We sailed and surfed and just had to stick it out and persevere, just go on like Columbus to the West Indies.

It was a little calmer after the bridge but the wind was still quite vicious as we approached the port. I finally got there behind the others with bigger boats than mine, and doused the sails so that I could motor to the slipway. I recovered the boat and said goodbye to everybody. I decided to drive all the way home, just for the softness of my bed! Even today, Saturday, I still have the sensation of my 'sea legs'. Yes, I think I was taken to the limit by sailing such a small boat on the Atlantic Ocean. It was all within the limit, but just. I wouldn't exchange the experience for very much !

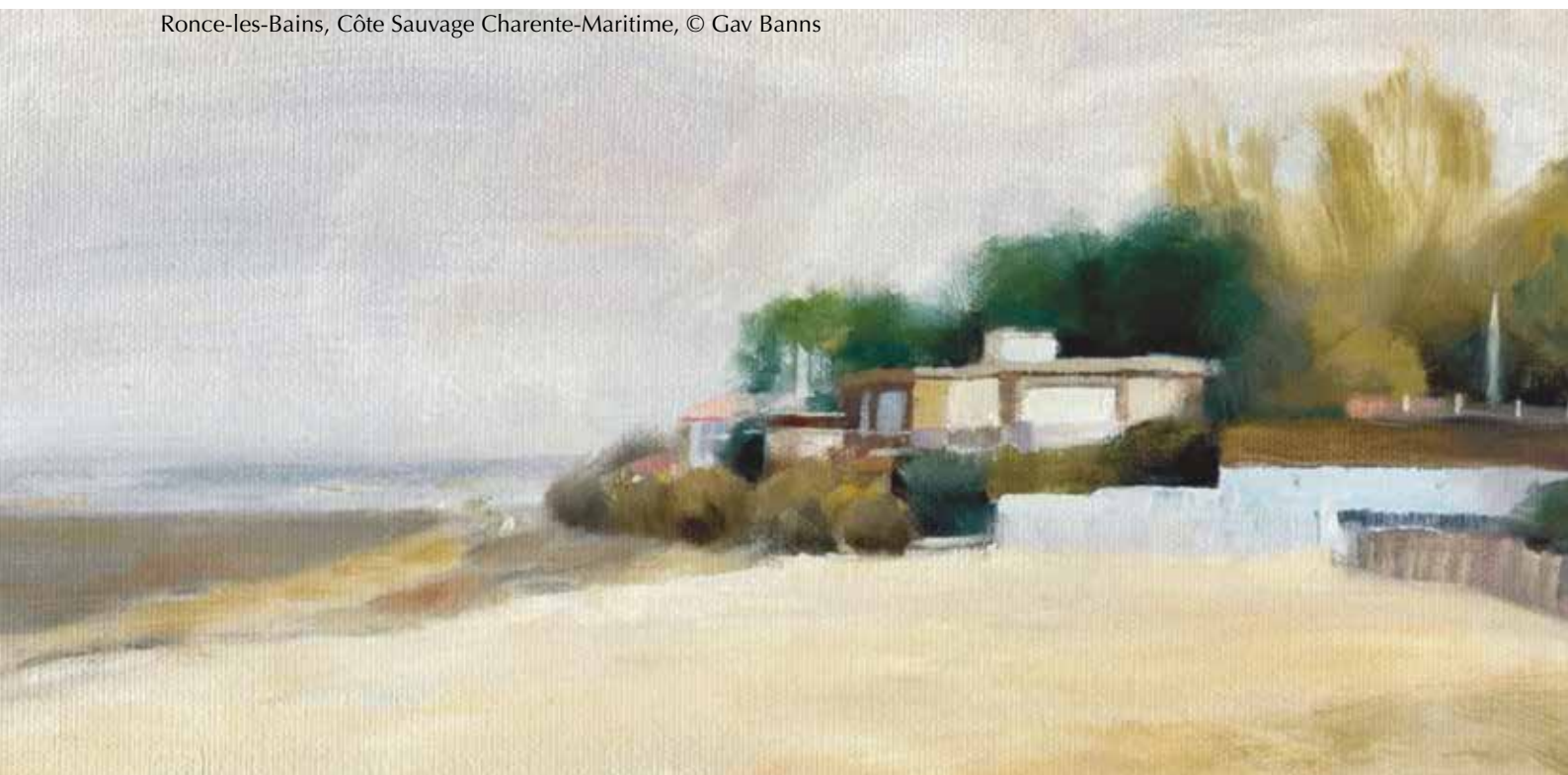
We all found the 'Cale de Bout Blanc' as the main slipway the 'Cale de la Capitainerie' was closed for the 'Grand Pavois' preparations. *Valentine IV* was the first to haul out, then *Marc'hMor* and *Water Rat*, followed by *Salvo* and *Sarum*. After our goodbyes Vincent in *Le Major* headed off to Port Neuf.

So, we had sailed 72 nautical miles as the seagull flies – a lot more when you include all the tacking and visits to five different ports. We had received a warm welcome in every port from the chefs du port, local people and other sailors. It had been a super week. We made some new friends, visited some 'new' ports, land earned from each other. Having Mark as crew in *Water Rat* and *Valentine IV* was a bonus. We enjoyed a real sense of team spirit. Isn't that what the DCA is all about?

As Frédéric said in an email over the weekend: 'Il y a une semaine, je ne connaissais aucun d'entre vous. Une semaine plus tard, nous avons noué des liens en partageant cette aventure. Merci à vous tous.'

'One week ago I didn't know any of you. One week later we have bonded while sharing this adventure. Thanks to all of you.' MD

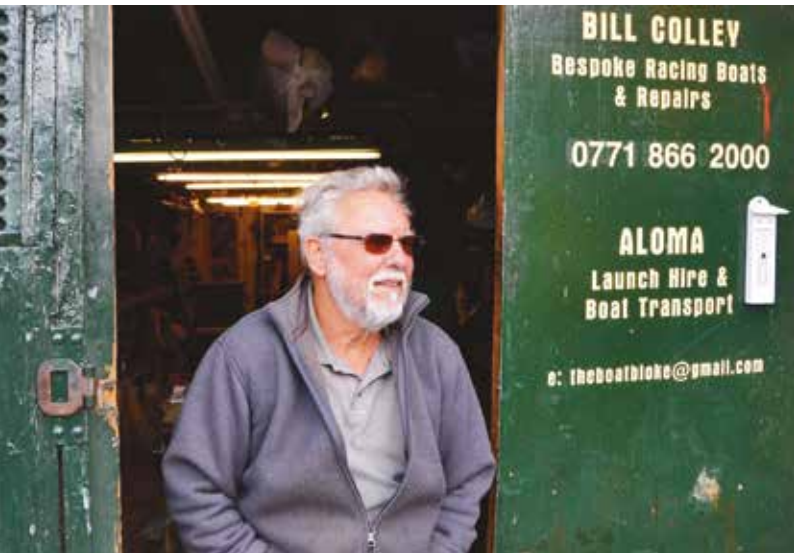
Ronce-les-Bains, Côte Sauvage Charente-Maritime, © Gav Banns



# The Story of *PicoMicroYacht*, Robin Morris

IT ALL STARTED WHEN I BOUGHT A LASER PICO IN 2005 so my children could learn to sail. They quickly moved on from it and I was left pondering what to do with the boat, in which I enjoyed pottering around. The main conundrum was that, whilst I enjoyed voyaging in estuaries, it had no transom to mount an outboard and was not set up for rowing. I was resigned to the fact that it had to go.

This all changed when I was in a lengthy committee meeting at work one day. I started to doodle a rowing contraption to slot into the Pico, enabling me to row with long sweep oars and a sliding seat, such as I had done in my youth. This kindled my enthusiasm for a new project, but I was wary of building it myself, lest I got the dimensions wrong. Then I stumbled across someone to do it for me, the last remaining designer and builder of wooden racing boats in the UK. I sat with Bill Colley drinking a cup of tea in his boathouse by Richmond Bridge, and explained my idea.



Bill Colley, who built the PicoMicroYacht rowing insert

Bill got the design spot on. When I trialled PicoMicroYacht it was immediately apparent it could be rowed relatively effortlessly at just under three knots for long distances. Furthermore, the low freeboard meant it could cope with headwinds, giving it flexibility in terms of passage plans. Consequently, I started voyaging not just in estuaries but in the sea. So began many years of adventures with PicoMicroYacht.

I quickly realised that rowing was not enough, and I needed to reinstate sail power, but how to do this without making it vulnerable to capsize out of sight of a rescue boat? The answer was to reduce the rig. I started out by cutting the mast just above the jib halyard so I could retain the small jib. Then I added a mizzen mast with another small sail, mounted on my rowing contraption.



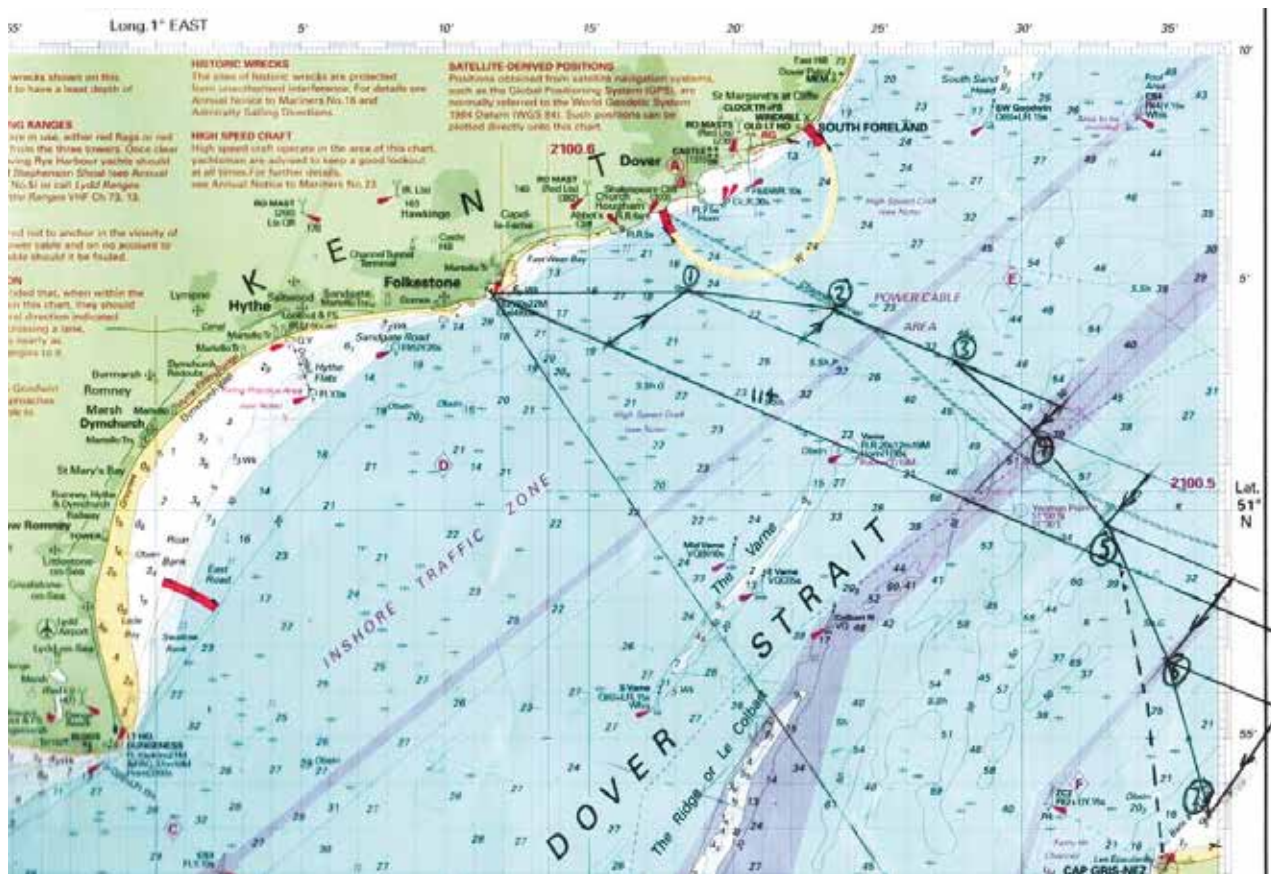
The PicoMicroYacht tiller system, designed to circumvent the mizzen mast

The mizzen interfered with the tiller, so I made a rudder with a T-bar with a tiller extension attached to it so I would 'push and pull' the rudder with a forward and backwards motion. The mizzen sail balanced the jib and they acted as an auxiliary to my rowing efforts. I now had a ketch version of a Pico that I could dinghy cruise.

I used this arrangement when I crossed the English Channel in 2012. While rowing round the north coast of Kent I read MacKinnon's *The Unlikely Voyage of Jack de Crow*, including his account of an almost foolhardy crossing of the Dover Strait in a Mirror Dinghy. Impetuously, I thought if Mackinnon had done it, so should I.

On the chosen day a force four wind headed me, and the two sails were pinned in all the way, close-hauled. The sails drove me forward and balanced the tendency of the waves and the wind to push me backwards. I navigated using one compass course all the way from Folkstone to Cap Griz Nez, the up-and-down Channel tide creating a perfect parabolic course (*see next page*).

I laboured for seven hours, initially in bright sunlight, but then fog descended close to the French Coast. Large container ships and freighters emerged out of the mists like leviathans, threatening my existence. However, I was protected by a safety boat, and the driver told me when to row harder or change my course to avoid the shipping. I can tell you that no extra incentive was needed to row harder. Halfway across a standing wave generated by the wake of a ship swept over me and PicoMicroYacht stuttered backwards. I saw my already weakened rudder floating away, broken. I rowed the next few hours without this effective skeg, with PicoMicroYacht yawing around as I tried to balance it and keep on course.



The voyage plan for PicoMicroYacht crossing the English Channel. A single compass direction was used throughout, and the parabolic course was shaped by the tide. Each number represents an hour travelled and I stuck to this plan until the end, when the tide swept me further down the channel than anticipated

PicoMicroYacht had proved itself. Despite the diminutive shape it seemed to ride over the waves for the most part and when it was swamped the water just sloshed out through the open transom, with no bailing required. However, I was not fooled as to the dangers of going out to sea in a small dinghy. I resolved to have certain rules, which by and large I stick to. The wave height should be forecasted to be smooth (technically under 0.5 metres) or thereabouts. Generally, neap tides are favoured. The wind forecast should be below force four. I always carry a radio and I have a personal locator beacon. I assiduously work the tides and generally navigate using the same skills as with a yacht, hence the name PicoMicroYacht.

PicoMicroYacht has taken me on many adventures, often inspired by a friendly group of charity runners who frequently include me in their plans. They ran the Southwest Coastal path in Cornwall, and I was expected to voyage along the coast at the same time. They did the South Downs, and I was there sailing along the seafront past Littlehampton, Worthing and Brighton, to arrive at Eastbourne. A trip to Ireland meant me rowing from Dublin to Limerick, including the 20-mile Lough Derg. They ran their marathons across the Isle of Wight while I found a way of circumnavigating it. Covid reduced their plans this year, but they ran around London while I explored the London waterways, including the Regent's Canal.

As part of the development of PicoMicroYacht I decided to experiment with a lug sail attached to the shortened mast. This had the advantage of being easy to 'scandalise' and I found myself sailing along with one hand on the tiller and another ready to let go either the mainsheet or main halyard if there was a hint of being overpowered. Lug sails now push PicoMicroYacht along as I use my rowing seat as a thwart, facing forwards.

As I enjoy innovation and gadgets, I have experimented with various arrangements on PicoMicroYacht. I employed an autopilot and realised I could drift along whilst cooking or even having a meeting on my mobile phone – but very cautiously, for obvious reasons! I wired up an AIS system, which I enjoy using to monitor other boat traffic and I have the luxury of a ship radio that I can use in addition to my portable radio. Having been in fog off the coast of France and also off the coast of South Devon, I decided it was wise to fit a radar reflector on the main mast and was able to mount navigation lights on top of it. Occasionally, people look at the radar reflector and make somewhat jokey remarks such as, 'I suppose you are going to France?' I have been known to reply in deadpan fashion, 'I have been there.'

PicoMicroYacht has provided me with great adventures away from my work life in a busy London hospital and a university. My wife Lorna is very supportive, although she rolls her eyes at what I am up to next. She knows




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PicoMicroYacht crossing the English Channel, here using the old rig. Note the eccentrically reefed mizzen sail, tied in because of the relatively high wind.

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PicoMicroYacht adventuring is good for me, but not for her. Up to now my work has not had the flexibility to allow me to join in with other adventurers, other than my local sailing club in Chichester Harbour where I sail a larger boat, but recently more retirement has made it realistic to join the Dinghy Cruising Association and start attending some rallies. I realise the DCA is a great home for PicoMicroYacht; the spirit of small boat adventuring is strong and my mild eccentricity with this boat (some would say creativity) is well understood.

Recently I have discovered the pleasures of setting off from Warsash in the Hamble, avoiding the shipping in Southampton Water, then fairly quickly finding the

contrasting tranquillity in the West Solent and the beauty of the Isle of Wight western land mass. I have enjoyed meeting up with like-minded adventurers in their interesting array of boats, all of which I decided there and then I would have if I could live in a parallel universe where you own simultaneously any boat you want.

Meanwhile, I am completing some voyaging along the South Coast, including Dorset, Devon and Cornwall. I have done most of it up to Fowey, with gaps. I am still contemplating the bit round Portland Bill – a support boat should make it sufficiently safe.

I have found PicoMicroYacht to be a tough and versatile dinghy. It is robust enough to be regularly hauled up a shingle beach. Grounding the dagger plate carelessly does not seem to damage it. It is light enough to launch easily. It turns on a sixpence. The versatile rig adapts to the weather. PicoMicroYacht requires no petrol and can be ‘motored’ for six or seven hours at stretch and sails sufficiently well. You can even sleep on it, with a bivvy tent – all I need for dinghy cruising.

Robin Morris \_\_\_\_\_

*The adventures of PicoMicroYacht are described in my Blog found on <http://picomicroyacht.blogspot.com/>*

*(Below) PMY's current rig, seen on Chesil Beach*



# The Hilbre Island Rally: A Bit of a Test

by Martin Wright

**F**OR ME THIS TRIP WAS A BIT OF A TEST – WE HAVE not sailed our new boat *Tarka* much since we bought her three years ago. We have new running rigging, and new trailer mods, so I expected I would learn quite a lot from this weekend. I ought to mention I am a very recent qualifier of some basic sailing courses and have not had much experience, especially as during the last two years I've done almost nothing due to Covid. One daysail in *Tarka* at Bala Lake with a sailing coach before lockdown and the second only at the DCA Coniston rally a few weeks ago. Marilyn's first time in a boat with me was Coniston and this trip would be her second. This would be the first time either of us had sailed in tidal waters without an experienced person in the boat.

We visited Dove Point some time ago but the tide was in so we had no visual appreciation of the shape of the East Hoyle bank. I studied the area using the latest available charts. John's sketch maps were a great help and his descriptions added colour: 'Now listen very carefully...', he started, 'I shall say this only once.'

So I pinned my ears back.

It appeared that timing was the critical factor for both launch and recovery. We had planned to arrive on Friday and set up early, but I was still busy trying to complete some trailer mods so we didn't get there until mid-morning on Saturday so the pressure was already on. Extra keel rollers, a bow guide and a keel trough were under construction on the trailer. Almost, as they say, 'Carpenters on board hammering and sawing while the boat slipped into the water.' I learned lessons at the Coniston rally only a few weeks ago when recovery went a bit sideways, adding several hours to our de-rig.

There, after recovery, I needed to lift the boat up on hydraulic jacks off the trailer to re-centre it on the keel rollers. *Tarka* weighs in at 1400 kg so it became clear to me what was needed was some means for proper alignment by adding guides and more rollers. This would be helpful for smooth and timely recovery which seemed mandatory for exiting from Dove Point because of the limited depth and short time available before the tide turned.



## Participants

Martin & Marilyn Wright	David Moss Sea Otter 18	<i>Tarka</i>
Phillip Barre	Lune Pilot	<i>Chimera</i>
Chris Woodworth	Comet Versa	<i>Aria</i>
John & Alix Hughes (With guest on Sat.)	Wharram Hitia 17	<i>Star Catcher</i>
Rick Hughes and two guests	Sunstar 18	<i>Amber</i>
Guest Joe Tyler	Halcyon 23	<i>My Way</i>

Delays getting the trailer ready meant I lost rigging time and when we got to Dove Point all the running rigging was in a large canvas bag and had yet to be set up. That's when Phil and Chris turned up and helped. Phil's boat was also built and rigged along traditional lines and he instinctively went into rigging up the mizzen. Chris and I set up the jib-furling gear but time now was getting very short and the launch window was closing.

'Five minutes Martin!' came the shout from John who was somewhere near the end of the slipway. He was, I presume, because I could not see him from where I was working on the staging area, holding up the other boats in our flotilla and witnessing the water depth dropping quickly. I was already 50/50 deciding whether to call it off so I said to Chris and Phil, 'Look you are already in, I might delay you too much, you go and I'll wait for the next tide.'

Shouts of protest and encouragement ensued so I decided to press on. The boat wasn't fully rigged but whatever was left to be done I felt could be done once we were at sea: fitting the jib sheet, parrel beads, rigging the running backstays as we motored out. Five minutes later *Tarka* was afloat and being guided to the landing point. We followed John's instructions to exit The Lake.



*Tarka* has a 7hp single-pot inboard diesel engine and as we chugged away from the slip past the mooring buoys we ran into the sandbank a few times, but by raising the centreplate were able to pick our way down the channel past the lighthouse and then around the end of East Hoyle Bank.

### To Hilbre and Welshman's Gut

We made our way out of The Lake and headed for the open sea, turning westward towards Hilbre making sure to sweep northwards, giving the sandbanks a wide berth. There was little wind and with clear blue skies all around it made for a very pleasant passage. Marilyn took the helm (this was the first time for Marilyn) while I clambered onto the coach roof to complete the rigging.

Luckily the tide was on the ebb and with not much wind the conditions were very calm. *Tarka* was very stable in the water and that made the job easy. After a short while the wind picked up a little and we set the sails and turned the engine off. It was an amazing contrast, suddenly it was so quiet, peaceful and we were sailing in the warm sunshine. It was a perfect start to our trip.

The waves were just small ripples, very little swell and with tide and wind in more or less the same direction and speed this made for a very comfortable first leg of the rally. We approached the north end of Hilbre and noticed a few seals bobbing up and down in the water in front of us. The other three boats were gently exploring the shallows just off the island. On the north of the island there is a disused lifeboat slipway jutting out from the hilltop down towards the sea. The island foreshore is quite rocky so we kept a greater distance away from it than the other vessels since our draught was a little deeper at 2ft, 4ft with the centre plate down.

Coming around the island we turned south into the Dee estuary and the wind picked up a little more. We had a gentle run up the Hilbre Swash, turning to avoid sandbanks on either side of the channel. We heard them first and then saw in the distance the seal colony,

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Drying out in Welshman's Gut



*Aria & Star Catcher seen from Chimera*

about 100 lying on the sandbank near the entrance to Welshman's Gut. It's a surprising sound that seals make if you've never heard them before. Their cries, grunts and snorts carry over the water and can be heard from the shore at West Kirby.

The other boats beached on the sandbank next to the Welshman's Gut just a little way down from the seal colony. Welshman's Gut is a small channel that dries and runs out quickly. You can wade across it when the level drops and walk up the sandbank to get a magnificent view all around. We dropped anchor just south from the other boats. The tide was now dropping very quickly and before long *Tarka* careened. I looked at how Phil's boat appeared, just about upright since he'd put some large fenders under the hull to keep her upright. I slipped a large round fender I had on *Tarka* under the har skid but found the weight of the boat was so great the fender was simply flattened and so had no effect at all. We cooked a meal on our gimballed Taylors paraffin stove, washed up and then walked over to socialise with the rest of our group.

As the sun went down we witnessed the most beautiful and amazing sunset. We had an uninterrupted view to the horizon, the sky was clear and visibility was excellent. The colour of the sun and reflections in the water and in the sky can only be described as being like a psychedelic trip. Layers of red, orange, yellow, blue and purple growing more intense with the distant army of wind turbines whirling their giant arms around in the colours and patterns made a dreamlike almost alien scene. Afterwards we returned to *Tarka* as the tide turned and as we refloated we laid our heads down to sleep deeply in the two comfortable berths and reflect on the day. What a day!

### Day 2 The Estuary

GURGLE GURGLE GURGLE ..... BUMP! Marilyn fell out of her bed and onto mine. No this wasn't an extract from *Fifty Shades of Grey*! The tide went out in the early morning sunshine, and *Tarka* careened onto the other side





*Chimera* on West Hoyle Bank

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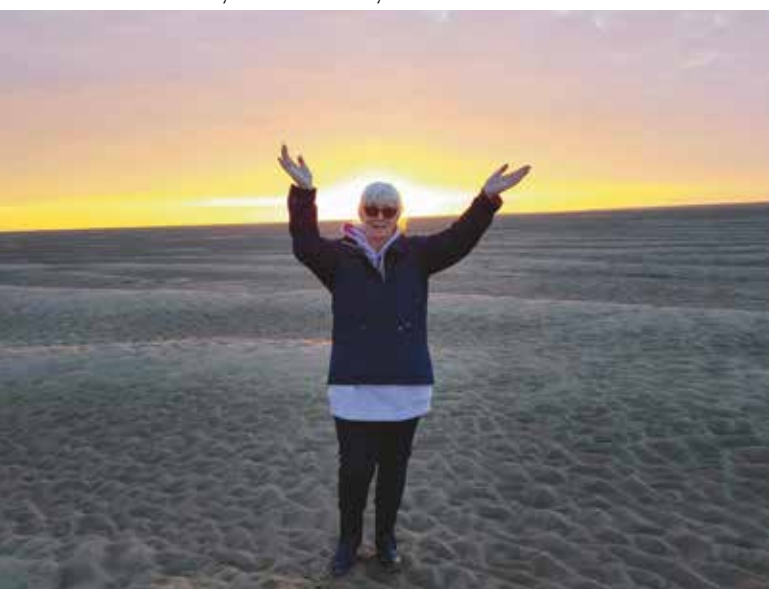
while we were asleep. In our already surreal world in the middle of the Dee Estuary with the howling seal colony next door and vivid dreams of sunsets and whirling wind turbines, our world now heeled at 25 degrees to starboard. I prepared hot drinks of tea on the stove while Marilyn started setting out to make a cooked breakfast. The tide returned and we made ready for the day's sailing up the estuary with the flood and later back down with the ebb.

The plan for today (Sunday) was to explore up towards Flint on the Welsh shore. The weather was sunny and a gentle southerly breeze once more allowed very pleasant sailing. This provided a good opportunity to practise a bit more with our new running rigging in calm conditions. As we sailed we noticed a stream of foam that snaked its way up the expanse of water. I reasoned this could either be the location of the deepest channels, but remembering that there is not too much depth anywhere around here I kept the centreplate control line handy ready to haul up quickly if we grounded.

We followed the other boats up towards the head of the Estuary. The impressive diagonal supports of the Flintshire Bridge could be seen in the distance. I began to feel that we should not go much further when I saw Phil's boat attempting to reverse out from a sandbank. We had already grounded a couple of times, so we decided to turn around. It was then when we looked at the chart to check our position that we realised we might be

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Marilyn on West Hoyle Bank



*Tarka* on West Hoyle Bank

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stranded when the tide turned and we shouldn't waste too much time in one spot before seeking deeper water. With the wind dropping we motored towards deeper water to the east but found our way blocked.

The same was true when we tried to feel our way around to get to the channel. I estimated the depth to be 3-4 ft and the tide would turn soon. All that remained was to backtrack so we reversed out of our tight spot and then headed north again. We were motoring against the flood initially so, using the gear lever on *Tarka's* variable prop drive I increased the pitch and increased revs to compensate for the extra resistance. This turned out to be a mistake because the little 7hp diesel began to output an alarming amount of exhaust and since we now had a following wind completely surrounded us in poisonous fumes. This I remedied by easing back on the prop pitch, reducing engine revs and changing course. Lesson learned!

We arrived at Hilbre motor-sailing ahead of the rest of the team. We sailed around the north end of the island keeping a distance of about 100 yds to keep clear of the rocks. We were not quite sure where exactly we were aiming for so we anchored about half way down the eastern side where it seemed quite sheltered. We weren't too far out as soon we were overtaken by the other DCA boats who landed on the sandy shoreline a few hundred yards further south. After drying out and assuming our usual 25-degree careened position once more we saw that we had landed in a muddy anchorage and so moving on and off the boat presented a bit of a challenge in keeping mud out of the boat. After using all the available plastic bags up as welly liners we decided to just stay in the boat rather than do much exploring around. During our stay I did manage to put out a second anchor to make sure we didn't move nearer the rocky shoreline when we refloated.

### Fire On Board

The general consensus from those in the know is that some people love Taylor stoves, the rest hate them. We found out one of the reasons why people hate them but it hasn't put us off – just made us more aware of how they work so it doesn't happen again. If the on-off dial to



*Aria and Star Catcher at Hilbre Island*

one or other of the burners is not completely off and the main switch has been turned 'on' then you might have a small but undetectable leak of paraffin that comes out of the burner and drips into the priming dish which, if you have a nice new gauze in the bottom of the dish, you can't see the paraffin lying in it. Then when you go to 'prime' the dish with alcohol and light it up to preheat the burner the resulting mixture of meths and paraffin produce what can only be described as an erupting volcano firework gone wrong. Then the fire alarm goes off.

Turning the stove off at this point is a good idea, and certainly reduces the overall firework display, but does not fix the issue of fuel burning in the pan. The only thing you have to do is extinguish as safely as possible with a fire extinguisher, which as our BSS examiner advised, is best done with a 1Kg powder extinguisher. So in true Dad's Army Captain Mainwaring style I said, 'Marilyn, stand aside and leave this to me.' I popped open the locker, pulled out an extinguisher, off with the safety cap, stuck my head under the coach roof (on reflection that was a bad idea) and let fly with 1kg powder. I emerged through a cloud of smoke completely caked from head to foot in white powder. The main thing is the small fire we had was out. Marilyn was very understanding. We had salad for tea.

### **And Back Again**

We awoke early to a howling gale with our jib flogging. The boat was bouncing up and down and I could see through the portholes the Hilbre light beacon and the street lights in West Kirby. The weather looked very severe with foggy grey clouds all around and high winds moving offshore from the south. This wasn't in the plan and this would present yet another challenge. John and the others had decided it was safe enough to risk sailing back, the one problematic boat being Chris's dinghy which was very light and fast. He decided to go back on mainsail only. We would hang back to follow everyone else, which wasn't hard being the slowest boat. We could then provide a rescue or a tow if needed.

The tide came in and we hauled anchors once everyone was afloat. I left the mainsail down, deciding to go back on the jib and mizzen, with motor to assist.

I secured everything on deck tightly and put anything loose away. Being the slowest boat it was not difficult to stay behind everyone else and we were soon left behind in any case. John was off like a shot in his super-fast catamaran, then Phil, then Chris. Then I found out having a mizzen causes some odd steering issues; if you are trying to turn downwind from a broad reach it keeps blowing you back. I found a solution to this by letting it out as far as it would go just in time to turn away from the west end of the Hoyle sandbank.

The further we made our way around the north Wirral shore the more the wind dropped off. The sun came out as we approached the lighthouse that marked our approach to Dove Point. We followed John's instructions in reverse and made our way through the channel towards the slip.

We waited for our turn to approach the slip in glorious sunshine and very little wind. I was frankly amazed at how quickly the weather had changed from a howling F5-6 to a 1-2 in the space of just over an hour. We hit one or two ribs of sand jutting out from the main bank but eased over these by lifting the centre plate a little. We could see the bottom clearly in the bright sunshine piercing through the clear water.

Recovery was very straightforward, apart from me losing my footing on the slipway and taking an early bath for everyone's amusement. My waterproof electronic car key still worked so all was well. I fetched the car and the haul-out was without any keel alignment issues thanks to the new bow guide and keel trough. The only thing I saw wrong with the keel trough was that it was a couple of inches too tall so that it made contact with the hull rather than just the sides of the keel – another job before the next rally.

All in all, mishaps aside, I can say on behalf of Marilyn and myself that we both had a really brilliant time. Thanks to John and Alix, Phil and Chris and the DCA this will be something I'll certainly never forget, especially with that amazing sunset and the seal colony – fantastic. Can't wait for the next time – we'll probably be at Ullswater or Windermere for the next one. *MW*



*Chimera at Hilbre Island*

# Curlew's Northern Migration

## Bill Haylock



Morning mist over Rum on passage to Ardnamurchan

### Three weeks and 324 nautical miles around Ardnamurchan, the Small Isles and the east coast of Skye...

I BOUGHT MY HUNTER LIBERTY 22 IN 2018 as a boat more suited to exploring the more exposed waters of the West Coast of Scotland than the Drascombe Longboat I had used for the previous nine years. Until this year, however, I'd not ventured far from my base in Loch Linnhe, staying mostly within the relatively sheltered waters of the Lynn of Morvern, the Sound of Mull and Loch Sunart, with only short trips into more exposed waters, out to the Garvellachs and to Coll.



Curlew dried out on Eigg

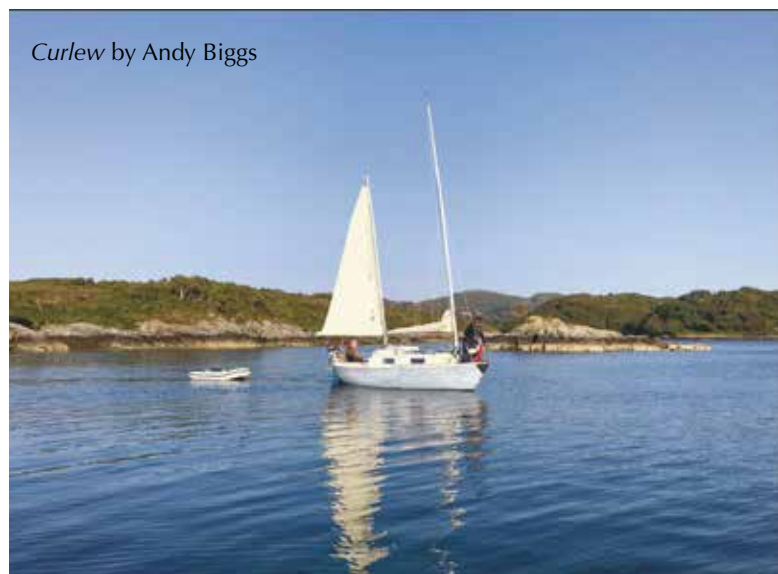
I really wanted to go further north, so I planned a three-week cruise, around the Point of Ardnamurchan, out to the Small Isles, up the Sound of Sleat, through the Kylerhea narrows, into the Inner Sound and ultimately

up to Loch Torridon. My long-time expedition buddy Lin Bean joined me as crew. Over 25 years we have done many mountain biking, open canoe and hill walking journeys together.

Although only six inches longer than the Longboat, the Liberty has significantly more freeboard and a much more spacious cabin than the Longboat-with-a-lid, the Drascombe Coaster. I chose the Liberty because, like the Drascombes, the Liberty has a mizzen and for cruising a mizzen is a very useful sail. Unlike the Drascombes, the Liberty is a cat ketch, with both masts stepped further forward and no foresail. The Liberty is also lightly ballasted (with stubby cast iron bilge keels and some concrete in the bilges alongside the fully-lifting cast iron centreplate), both masts are unstayed and it has a nice canoe stern with outboard well and a stern-hung rudder.

It's a very easy boat to manage single-handed, without winches, and is beautifully well-balanced. Close-hauled, with the sails set properly, it sails itself with the helm left free.

The boat I bought was named *White Wings* (the first owner had been in the RAF apparently) which I thought a bit naff. So, keeping the theme of wings, I renamed her *Curlew*.



Curlew by Andy Biggs

The bird has a special significance for me. I remember, as a child, listening to a nature programme on the BBC Home Service introduced by James Fisher. It's 'theme tune' was a recording of the bubbling call of the curlew. Even at that young age, growing up in the flatlands of East Anglia, the sound conjured a longing to visit wild northern landscapes in my mind. When I moved to the North East in my late 20s and lived in a small ex-mining settlement in County Durham, I was thrilled to stand in my garden and hear that same call of the curlew. So now, in early August, I was migrating northwards with *Curlew*.

**Day 1:** We set off from Linnhe Marine, where I keep the boat ashore on its trailer, on a fine Sunday morning with a light north-easterly breeze and the tide in our favour. Setting the scene for the next three weeks, the wind proved fickle. As we approached the Sound of Mull, the wind turned to the west and we made a long tack towards Duart Castle on Mull, before heading north into the Sound. Fortunately the tide was with us again now.

It was slow progress, working WNW towards Salen Bay where we planned to anchor overnight and, as on many occasions over the next 20 days, we had to motorsail at times to make progress. We were rewarded with an impressive light show as the rays of the setting sun lit up the clouds over the mountains of Mull and Ardnamurchan. The wide open north-facing bay was flat calm overnight, apart from the wake of the occasional ships passing through the Sound.



Rounding Ardnamurchan

**Day 2:** The weather was fine, but the wind was straight down the Sound and we made slow progress tacking against the tide. We had a rendezvous with a fellow Dinghy Cruising Association member Phil Barre, who was holidaying at Drimnin with his 14ft Lune Pilot, and so we had to motorsail again. After our meeting in a

remote bay on Mull, we continued on to Tobermory for a brief stop for supplies. Although the village, with its brightly painted buildings, nestled in a green, sheltered bay is very picturesque, it has a very crowded marina and we didn't want to hang around.

We headed north and then east into Loch Sunart and into a shallow natural harbour that almost splits the small island of Oronsay into two. We'd arranged to meet Phil there again, who was intending to camp on his dinghy. By early evening when we arrived a stiff breeze was blowing from the north into the anchorage, but we had a peaceful night in solitude. As so often on this trip, the Liberty enabled us to get into these small, shallow, peaceful anchorages which I much prefer to any marina.

**Day 3:** The morning was fine and calm and we said our farewells to Phil. Stornoway Coastguard's marine safety information broadcast on VHF was warning of high winds arriving within 48 hours and so we decided to round Ardnamurchan Point before the wind and sea started getting up. Heading west out of Loch Sunart, the light breeze came and went and we had to resort to the motor again. Passing Kilchoan and approaching the open sea the wind picked up, but from the west now and although it gave respite from the noise of the motor, we had a tedious time of long tacks in the widening mouth of the loch.

Slowly we approached the notorious waters off the Point of Ardnamurchan, but today it was benign as the westerly breeze faded and we wallowed in a sea that seemed oily and lethargic as the sun beat down. We hugged the rocky shore to get a close-up view of the lighthouse. Slowly the distinctive skyline of our destination, the island of Eigg, with its vertical basalt columns of An Sgurr, emerged into view around the headland. In the light breeze it seemed to take an age for the low shape of the smaller island of Muc to pass to port, and for the Sgurr's cliffs to become distinct, before we could see the seamark we were looking for - the small island to the south of Eigg, Eilean Chathastail. The narrow channel between the two would take us to the ferry terminal and just to the north of that was the entrance to the drying anchorage of Galmisdale Boat Harbour. As we sailed through the channel and past the ro-ro pier the wind was building up into strong gusts, an indication of what was to come. I knew from a previous trip in my Longboat that the harbour would provide good shelter from the weather about to arrive and a safe spot to take the ground at each low tide.

**Days 4 – 6:** We ended up spending three days in the harbour, walking ashore at low tide to get supplies from the well-stocked community shop and to take advantage of the public showers. At night the gusts rushing over the ro-ro causeway disturbed my sleep as the boat suddenly lurched with each blast of wind. The roar of the waves on the jagged reefs that almost enclose the boat harbour to the east prompted nagging concerns about what would happen if the anchor dragged, but the



(Above) In Galmisdale Harbour. (Right, top) – Sgurr of Eigg



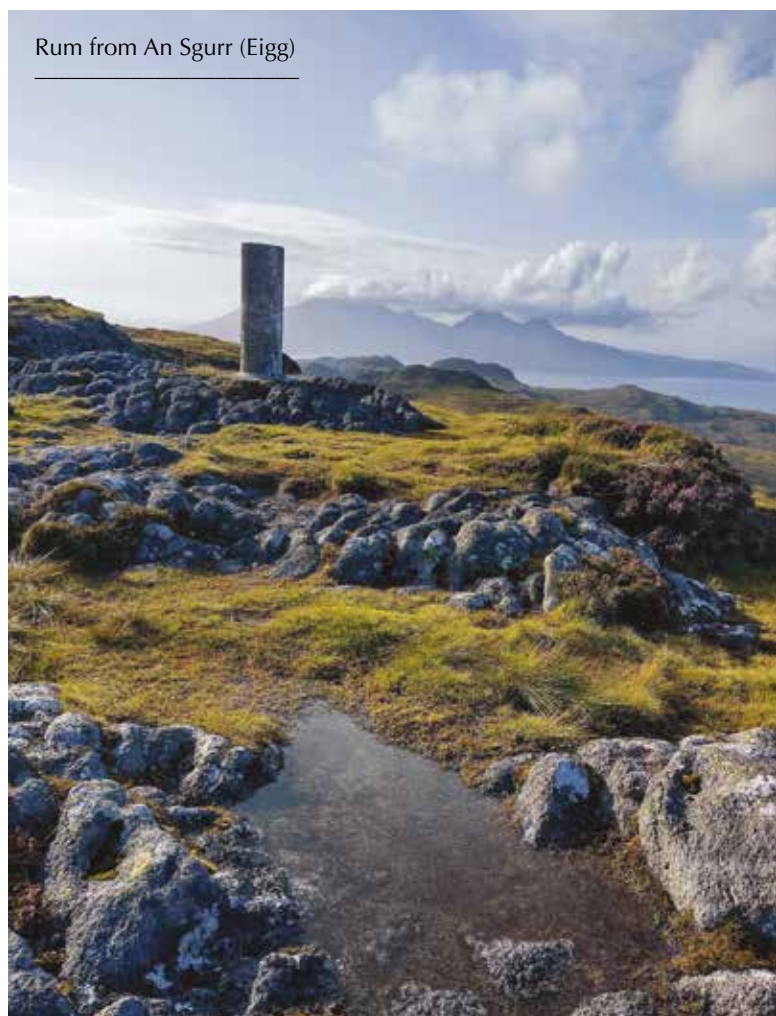
after an hour or so and the 12 nautical miles into Loch Scresort on Rum took us until early afternoon. The approach to Rum, with its rugged mountains and cliffs, is impressive. The mountains have Norse names (these islands were under the control of the Norwegian crown until 1266) and Trollaval hints at the superstition with which the Norse sailors regarded the dark, forbidding peaks. We were greeted with sunshine, but a wreath of cloud clung to the summits. We moored on one of the visitors' buoys in the sheltered loch and went ashore to replenish our water supplies, have a shower in the excellent wooden shower shacks on the shore, and walk a little way into the rugged interior of the island. The whole island is now a national nature reserve. Like many of the smaller islands, it had been bought by a wealthy industrialist in the 19th century as a 'sporting' estate. Most of the population was evicted, apart from a few who were employed as estate servants, and the red deer were encouraged to multiply to provide 'sport' for the owner and his rich friends.

Rocna held its grip in the firm sand, as my more rational thoughts knew it would. As *Curlew* settled on the sand with the ebbing tide, I climbed out and examined the anchor in the light of my head torch. It was completely buried. At last I could relax and sleep.

We spent the time when it wasn't raining ashore walking and aboard reading when the rain came. One obligatory trip was the scramble to the summit of An Sgurr, with its fine views of the mountains of Rum and Skye. Eigg has fascinated me since I first visited. In May 1973 I walked from the old stone jetty (it was long before the ro-ro pier was built) past a wood full of bluebells and primroses, echoing to the calls of cuckoos, and I was instantly captivated by the beauty and tranquility of the island. In 1997 the people of Eigg turned their back on a long history of neglect by successive absentee landlords and achieved one of the first community buy-outs enabled by the Scottish Government's Land Reform Act. Its population is now growing and they have created a new future for themselves through community action, such as creating their own energy grid, based largely on renewable generation.

Day 7: The high winds and rain abated on our fourth night on Eigg and so early on the Saturday morning we headed out of the harbour and turned north, up the east coast of Eigg, heading for the neighbouring, but very different, island of Rum. Again the wind began to fade and shift

Rum from An Sgurr (Eigg)





Loch Scresort, Rum



Part of Gavin Maxwell's shark fishery on Soay

When the island was sold by his descendants to the Nature Conservancy Council in 1957, the island became a laboratory for the study of the red deer population. In an experiment a couple of decades ago, a part of the island was enclosed by a high deer fence. The regeneration of native trees and shrubs has been remarkable and demonstrates the ecological impact that overpopulation by red deer for deer stalking has had across Scotland. Those bare heather-covered mountains and treeless valleys are not a natural ecosystem, they are the result of asset-stripping landowners felling forests and running too many sheep and deer on the land.

**Day 8:** The morning brought a fresh westerly breeze and we were able to sail straight off the mooring, out of Loch Scresort and turn north towards Skye, After all the motoring of the first few days it was good not to have to start the motor. Somewhere ahead to the north were the jagged rocky spires of the Cuillin mountains, but dark clouds and mist came down to sea level. I set a course for Soay, a small island off the south coast of Skye, as yet invisible in the grey gloom ahead. Curtains of rain hung from many of the clouds, but the wind was good for once.

Slowly the gloom began to lighten and Skye began to appear as a low, dark line, although the drama of its peaks was still obscured. Sailing around the east and north sides of Soay, we came into the natural shallow harbour that almost bisects the island. Although the

wind had now veered to the north-west and was blowing straight into the harbour, it felt safe and secure. I had planned to go on to Loch Scavaig on Skye, but it is notorious for squalls and dramatic downdraughts from the surrounding mountains, so although it was only early afternoon we decided to stay the night.

**Day 9:** Before leaving Soay we went ashore to explore the intriguing ruins beside the harbour. A low cliff had been built up to form a quay and beside that stood a derelict stone house with extensive low outbuildings and the rusting remains of a stationary steam engine. They are the remains of an unsuccessful shark-fishing and processing business established by Gavin Maxwell after the second world war. Although better known as the nature-loving author of *Ring of Bright Water*, Maxwell was also responsible for the slaughter of around 1000 basking sharks in the business which he ran here for three years before it collapsed financially in 1948. The sharks were harpooned and towed to Soay harbour, where the carcasses were butchered and the livers rendered to extract the oil.

Leaving Soay we sailed east along the Skye shore to Loch Scavaig. As we turned into the sea loch the wind died and the water became flat calm. We slowly motored into Loch na Cuilce, a sheltered pool at the head of Loch Scavaig, and dropped anchor beside the Coruisk Memorial Hut, a climbers' bothy. This must be one of the most dramatic anchorages anywhere in



Loch na Cuilce, off Loch Scavaig, Skye

the world. It is a bowl enclosed by the precipitous rock flanks of the Cuillin range, with Gars-bhien towering immediately above. All around the sky is hemmed in by a ring of jagged peaks, mirrored in the glassy water. All is silent, apart from the waterfalls of Allt a' Chaoich, tumbling down to the loch.

Suddenly the tranquility was shattered by a motor launch carrying 50 or so day-trippers which it disgorged onto the shore. They trooped off and disappeared over the rise which hid the valley of Coir' Uisg and its freshwater loch from our view. We ate our lunch and moved on. As we slowly motored out of Loch Scavaig the wind returned.

At first we were hit by some heavy gusts as the wind eddied into the entrance of the loch, but as we left the loch the wind became a steady, fresh westerly breeze, for which I was very thankful. We had 18 nautical miles ahead of us to our planned destination for the day – Armadale in the Sound of Sleat. Pushing us along at 4 – 5 knots, the breeze carried us almost to the Sound of Sleat in a couple of hours, before it began to drop. Despite the light breeze the seas approaching the Point were confused and lumpy as the tidal current squeezed around the point.

Once we were into the Sound of Sleat it all became much calmer, and now the wind was behind us. It took another couple of hours to reach Armadale. It had been a long time since I had been into the port, which is the destination for the Skye ferries from Mallaig. It was smaller than I remembered, with not much room for



In the Sound of Sleat, Lin Bean on the tiller

anchoring, and a workaday kind of place with as many fishing and work boats as leisure craft. We moored on one of the visitors' buoys provided by the local community, and paid for via an honesty box on the old stone pier. There is not much in the way of facilities, apart from the rather run-down ferry terminal, but there were rubbish bins and a water tap, and a notice advertising the garage and general stores 200 metres inland.

**Day 10:** After a walk to buy petrol and supplies from the surprisingly well-stocked shop we sailed off the mooring and set off on a run across the Sound of Sleat towards the mouth of Loch Hourn. On the way we passed the distinctive round white tower on the shore of the Gaelic college of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, which is part of the University of the Highlands and Islands. I enrolled on an Introduction to Scottish Gaelic distance-learning course at the college in 2010 and attended a very enjoyable weekend school at the campus. I never got to the stage of being able to converse in Gaelic, but at least it gave me a clue how to pronounce gaelic place names and understand their meanings, as well as an insight into the rich culture of the language.

Approaching the entrance to Loch Hourn, the wind died. We drifted for half an hour, being carried into the loch at half a knot by the tide. The gentlest of breezes returned and I decided to try the spinnaker. It increased the speed up to 1.5 to 2 knots and we slowly made progress, hugging the south shore. Loch Hourn is, to my mind, one of the most beautiful of the fjord-like lochs on



Entering Loch Hourn

the west coast. The steep sides are thickly wooded with oak, ash and hazel and in spring bluebells and primroses adorn the shore. Lin and I had canoed in twice from the head of the loch in the early 2000s to camp and walk the Knoydart hills. This was the first time I had approached from the sea and it was lovely to be back. After sailing down to the small settlement of Arnisdale, we sailed back along the north shore and anchored for the night in the lee of Eilean Ràrsaid.

**Day 11:** We made an early start to sail north up the Sound of Sleat and catch the turn of the tide at the narrows of Caol Reithe (Kylarhea) where the tide runs at up to 8 knots. We timed it just right, as the flood tide was starting, which took us along at a couple of knots into Loch Alsh. From there we needed to sail west, under the Skye bridge and into the Inner Sound. Unfortunately, the wind was from the west. The cat ketch rig of the Liberty has lots of plus points but, lacking a headsail, close windedness is not one of them.

With 110-degree tacks we made slow progress and had to start the outboard to pass under the bridge and clear the navigation channel. Once out into the Inner Sound we sailed north and then east along the coast and into Plockton harbour. We had a rendezvous here with Richard and Ewa Hancock, who had recently bought a Liberty based on Loch Kishorn. They were keen to ask about my experience of sailing a Liberty and so we had an evening of much boaty chat, punctuated by a trip ashore to buy fish and chips.



Waiting for the tide in Loch Alsh

**Day 12:** We said goodbye to Richard and Ewa and headed towards the Crowlin Islands, with the ultimate goal for the day the island of Raasay. It was slow progress again, with the WNW wind necessitating long tacks. Another sheltered natural harbour lies between the two larger islands of the group and we stopped there for lunch. The wind had shifted to northwest and, after we emerged from Crowlin Harbour, a long beat took us all the way to the south end of Raasay. We anchored for the night in Churchton Bay, overlooked by Raasay House. This is where Dr Samuel Johnson and his aristocratic sidekick James Boswell were convivially entertained by the laird, Malcolm McLeod, on their Journey to the Western Isles in 1773. Johnson had a prejudicial low opinion of Scots and all things Scottish in general, but he enjoyed his time here, from the moment he alighted from '... Raasay's carriage which was a good stout open boat made in Norway.' As he summarised his experience of Raasay: 'Without is the rough ocean and the rocky land, the beating billows and the howling storm: within is plenty and elegance, beauty and gaeity, the song and the dance.' After operating as an outdoor adventure centre from 1984, until gutted by fire during renovation work in 2009, Raasay house is now an upmarket hotel. You can sip a coffee in the rooms where Johnson was entertained by McLeod's tales of his part in Bonnie Prince Charlie's escape after the 1745 Jacobite rebellion.

**Day 13:** As the inshore waters forecast promised, a fresh southerly breeze was blowing as we left Churchton Bay.



The plan was to sail up the Sound of Raasay, pop into Portree for supplies, and head on north to Staffin Bay on the Trotternish peninsula of Skye. From there, the intention was to sail east to Loch Torridon – the ultimate goal of the voyage – before starting the return to Loch Linnhe.

On the way to Portree the wind was already fading, After a visit to Portree Coop, and fish and chips at the harbour, we set off to continue progress northwards. But, as so often during this trip, the wind did not oblige, After a lull it reappeared as the light zephyr from the North. That was it. The plan to get to Torridon, and see the location of our epic winter ascent of Beinn Alligin a few years previously, was thwarted. It was time to start the southward return.

We made slow progress back down the Sound of Raasay as the wind came and went until, all of a sudden, fierce gusts blew up from the south west. Time to head for shelter for the night, Fortunately we were close to Camas a' Mhòr-bheòil (Big-mouth Bay, it translates as) a wide, shallow north-facing bay on the Skye shore, well sheltered by a long, rocky spit and high, grass-covered dunes, A long swell was rolling down the Sound from the north, which crashed onto the shore with an endlessly repeated roar, but it felt safe and secure from the wind.

**Day 14:** By morning the Sound was flat calm with not a breath of wind. Grey misty gloom had descended too. No option but to start the outboard. With the Honda 5 at little more than tickover the noise level is bearable and the boat made three knots. Halfway back to the Kyle of Lochalsh the rain came – large, heavy drops dimpling the flat, grey water. It was a tedious day, watching Raasay slowly vanishing into the greyness astern and searching for the graceful arch of the Skye bridge in the equally grey distance ahead. Eventually we anchored in Balmacara Bay, Loch Alsh, for the night to wait for high tide in the morning so we could ride the ebb tide back through the Kyclerhea narrows.

**Day 15:** We woke to thick mist all around. This was not good, considering the sizeable ships that frequently come through the narrows. They might spot us on their radar, but we wouldn't see them until too late. By the time we'd had porridge and coffee the mist was beginning to break up into ghostly tendrils clinging to the mountainsides. A thick bank of fog drifted across the surface of Loch Alsh, but we motored slowly through it and emerged to see the narrows still well ahead of us.

The tide had only recently turned but, unlike our journey north through the narrows, it was now spring tides. The current picked us up like a conveyor belt and the GPS speed increased from 2kt over log speed, to three, then four and five until we were chugging along at tickover doing 8 knots over the ground. Before long the current spat us out through swirling eddies into the wide bay of Glenelg.

And now the sun was shining on us, as it was to do for the rest of our voyage. A light breeze sprang up from the north and we could sail again at last. We



Gloom over Skye

tucked in behind the Sandaig Islands and anchored off the bay where Gavin Maxwell lived after his shark-slaughtering sojourn on Soay. This was where Maxwell lived with his otters and wrote the book for which he is now best remembered. Taking advantage of the now glorious, warm sunshine, we used some of our precious fresh water to wash clothes and hang them out to dry, knowing we could get more water later at Armadale.

After this leisurely break we set off slowly again as the wind came and went, across the mouth of Loch Houran and down the east shore of the sound of Sleat and then back across to Armadale, as we were getting low on petrol with all the motoring in the long calm spells. As I went ashore, petrol can in hand, a couple of friendly locals warned me that the petrol station was not open until 9am the following morning. One of them, an inshore fisherman, kindly offered me the use of his vacant mooring buoy for the night.

**Day 16:** I was at the petrol station before it opened and we set sail as soon as I was back aboard. It was a glorious sunny morning, but yet again the wind soon vanished. Rounding the Point of Sleat, instead of the agitated, confused seas of the outward journey, the waves were now slow and languid. Land and sea both lay torpid under the glare of a cloudless sky. The rest of the morning passed in slow motion as we motored at three knots. The mountains of Rum, 10 miles dead ahead, appeared to be retreating bashfully as we slowly crept up on them. We had plenty of time to appreciate the almost 360-degree vista of hills on the skyline: to

the north the Black and Red Cuillin of Skye; east, the mountains of Knoydart and Moidart; south, the long, low undulating blue line of Ardamurchan; and west, the distinctive dark silhouettes of Eigg and Rum. It was early afternoon by the time we anchored near Rum's old stone pier in Loch Scresort to have a welcome shower and lunch. A good northerly breeze had sprung up by the time we moved on and at first we made good progress under sail as we rounded the north end of Rum. Beautiful white sand beaches punctuate the dark, cruel cliffs of Rum, and we were reminded of how cruel they can be. What first drew my attention as rocks of a strange shape and colour resolved into the rusting wreck of a large trawler through the binoculars, tossed onto the rocks at the foot of the cliffs.

Before long the lethargic calm returned as we steered towards Canna, squinting towards the dark, indistinct hump over a dazzling sea. It was a long time before the dark mass revealed the separate shapes of Sanday and Canna, and the channel between the two where Canna Harbour lay. Coming into the harbour was something of a culture shock. We had grown accustomed to having our anchorages pretty much to ourselves, but this was like an aquatic holiday park, with people lounging in the evening sun on the decks of big, shiny yachts. The acres of blinding white plastic and glittering chrome were disorientating as we pattered through the throng, feeling very small and scruffy. Fortunately our shallow draught meant that we could go where they could not, so we found ourselves a space on the far side of the moorings, towards the shallows, to drop our anchor.

Sunset on Canna



**Day 17:** A row ashore and a chat with the harbour master explained the long crocodiles of people trailing along the track from the harbour. What I had taken to be a billionaire's plush motor yacht moored in the harbour turned out to be a mini cruise ship with 93 people aboard. Canna was gifted to the National Trust for Scotland by its last owner, a distinguished scholar of Gaelic language and folklore, John Lorne Campbell.

The harbour master said his wife, employed as the archivist at Canna House, would be singing Gaelic songs in the gardens of the house at 11am. Her singing was lovely, but the crowd of elderly people, shepherded by earnest young tour guides clutching walkie-talkies, spoiled the effect for me, rather. When she invited the audience to join her in a sing-song we hastily made our excuses and left, to walk and explore the island.

It's a stunningly beautiful island – green and fertile like Eigg, rather than rocky and barren like Rum. We soon escaped the crowds and walked along the south shore, admiring the white sand beaches and turquoise sea and watching the ravens doing aerobatics, seemingly just for the joy of it. Walking back to the harbour after a 9-mile exploration, our boat looked tiny and out of place. We'd already decided we were going to move that night and anchor in a reef-enclosed bay with a beautiful beach that we had spotted on our walk. It was a 5-mile motor, around the perimeter of Sanday island, but well worth it. We just had one small and oldish yacht for company, and the couple aboard it rowed across in their dinghy for a friendly chat.

**Day 18:** A F3-4 northerly breeze had been promised by the gentle, seductive female Western Isles accent from Stornoway Coastguard on the VHF. This was the day to return around Ardnamurchan, and we should make it in time to have the tide going our way. Indeed, we had a lovely F3-4 northerly – for the first half hour. After that, as we sailed to the west of Rum, keeping a respectful distance from its intimidating cliffs, the wind began to run out of puff. Yet again. Despite this there was a very noticeable long, slow Atlantic swell running from the west. As we passed the southern tip of Rum, heading towards Muck, a confused chop was superimposed on the swell and the boat's motion became quite unsettling as, with little wind, the main and mizzen booms crashed from side to side. The pilot book warned that these seas were often rough due to the strong currents and shallow banks. But these waters are also where minke whales are often seen – and we weren't disappointed. Suddenly, just a couple of metres off our port side, a bulky grey back with distinctive hooked dorsal fin broached the surface. Much bigger than any dolphin, it must have been as long as the boat. It came up once more, further away, and then vanished. It was a heart-stopping moment.

Reluctantly, I had to start the motor again. The tidal current at times seemed to be against us, when it should, in theory have been with us. I assumed that Muck was diverting the generally southwest set of the tide towards the northwest as we got closer to the island.



(Left) Andy Biggs and Kathleen in Loch na Droma Buidhe

Sure enough, once we had passed to the west of Muck the tide was with us again. The clear air was becoming hazier and it was still hard to distinguish just where the Point of Ardnamurchan lay against the north of Mull. It was just one misty blue line in the distance and I had to rely on the little 5 inch screen of the chart plotter to steer the right course. Eventually the lighthouse appeared and then the cliffs curved to the east, announcing the entrance to Loch Sunart. The wind also got up, with sudden strong gusts rushing down from the cliffs and for short spells the log registered 6 knots – the fastest we travelled over the whole trip!

As we neared our planned anchorage, Loch na Droma Buidhe (Drumbuie), the wind became gentle and we ghosted through the beautiful, sheltered loch to a small bay in its north-east corner where I have anchored several times over the past 10 years. Loch na Droma Buidhe has become an increasingly popular anchorage for yachts, but this shallow bay is usually empty. This time, however, two Drascombe Coasters occupied it. As we drifted closer I realised one of the Drascombes was *Kathleen*, the boat of my friend and fellow DCA member Andy Biggs! I knew he was cruising the West Coast, but had no idea he would be here. It was great to see him and catch up with his adventures.

**Day 19:** The day dawned so clear, bright and still – like a perfect diorama set in crystal. Trees, rocks, the distant hills and wisps of mist were perfectly reflected in mirror-flat water and shone with the golden light of the low sun. I hardly dared to move in case I disturbed the perfection with ripples as the boat moved under my shifting weight. After a lingering breakfast it was time to break the spell and move on. A light breeze sprang up as we approached the narrow channel out into Loch Sunart, but died away as soon as we emerged into the wide expanse of water we had to cross to reach the Sound of Mull.

Andy had set sail for Kilchoan on the north shore of Sunart and was making imperceptible progress. I reluctantly started the outboard and motored close to Sunart's south shore. Petrol was getting low again so we headed across the Sound and into Tobermory Harbour. After a quick trip ashore for 5 litres of petrol and an ice cream, we headed south out of the harbour, through the shallow channel between the mainland and Calve Island. The tide was low, but there was still a couple of feet of water at the southern end of the channel – plenty to squeeze the Liberty through with the centreplate up.

The rest of the day was another tedious round of catching occasional breaths of wind, drifting with the tide and starting the motor when boredom and concern over lack of progress overcame abhorrence of the Honda's thumping. At last we reached Loch Aline, but rather than go into the shelter of the loch we decided to motor a bit further, to anchor in Ardtornish Bay for the night. An odd-looking motorsailer was there already and later we were joined by a little old Westerly and finally by one of those vintage ships converted into a mini cruise liner, which seem to have become a big thing in recent years.

**Day 20:** We were bounced awake by the chop from a breeze which had sprung up from the south. After the tedium of the day before, it was good to sail again, even though it meant tacking down the Sound of Mull until we could turn the corner into the Lynn of Morvern. But, true to form, soon after we entered the Lynn, the wind faltered and then died. More slow motoring, along the Morvern shore towards the massive Glensanda quarry. One of the bulk carriers, which take the roadstone from the quarry by sea, appeared to be doing a ponderous three-point turn, before heading southwest towards the open sea. But then the wind reappeared and we headed under sail across Loch Linnhe for Shuna island and our base at Linnhe Marine. In fact, we goose-winged through all the moored yachts and, beside the pontoon, spun the boat on its axis – as only a ketch or yawl can do – dropped the mainsail and started the motor just to bring the boat alongside the pontoon. After all the motoring we had had to do over the three weeks, it felt good to at least complete the journey under sail. Later, with a fresh breeze blowing, we decided to make the most of it and sail across Loch Linne to Loch a' Choire, a flooded glacial bowl ringed by mountains, off the main loch. It's a place I've often sailed over to for a peaceful night at anchor over the past two years.

**Day 21:** We woke to thick mist that obscured everything – even the shore only 100 metres away. After breakfast we took the inflatable ashore to walk up the steep track that led up to a dam high above the loch that fed water to the micro-hydro power station on the shore. We eventually got above the inversion and looked down on the mist below. Above us a thin veil of high cloud was beginning to obscure the sun. The weather was changing and rain was forecast. It had been a voyage to remember, but now it was time to head back to Linnhe Marine and recover the boat onto her trailer and leave her until the next time. *WH*



On the Guadalupe River

## Building the 'Wee Lassie' Canoe ~ Kent Rush

### HAD THE URGE TO BUILD ANOTHER BOAT.

Already short of room to store the eight small boats I have built (*La Verne, Haydeé V., Gwendolyn, Bertie, Melva Gwen* and *Emma* plus two sea kayaks never named) I had to think this one through. Another small canoe, however, wouldn't be too much, I figured. I could always shoehorn it in amongst the others.

I had read Atwood Manley's *Rushton and His Times in American Canoeing*, admiring the designs, the workmanship and his history with the ACA. Most of all I had admired his dedication to making boats light but also strong, durable and 'portable'. Until Rushton's time most small boats were portable only if you had enough men to carry them.

Inspired by Thomas Hill's book on ultra-light boatbuilding I had built two lapstrake boats: Hill's Charlotte canoe and Marc Barto's extended version of the classic Melonseed fowling skiff (Chapelle). For the Melonseed I also used Hill's method of lining off and beveling the planks using longitudinal ribbands over the frames. These two boats and five of my other boats were built using marine plywood.

And yet, I had an urge to build a boat using solid wood planks: a less modern, more traditional approach.

In the appendices of Manley's book are line drawings and tables of offsets for seven of Rushton's canoes, sailing canoes and guide boats. They were drawn in 1967 by Orvo Markkula for the Adirondack Museum (now 'The Adirondack Experience: the Museum on Blue Mountain Lake'), based on measurements taken from the boats in their collection; there are no surviving original drawings or plans of any of the Rushton boats. These drawings include the famous *Sairy Gamp* designed and built for the small and frail outdoors



1. Frame with ribbands, keel and inner stems



2. Plank patterns



4. Glueing garboard plank

writer, 'Nessmuk' (George W. Sears), at an improbable nine feet in length and weighing only 10 pounds.

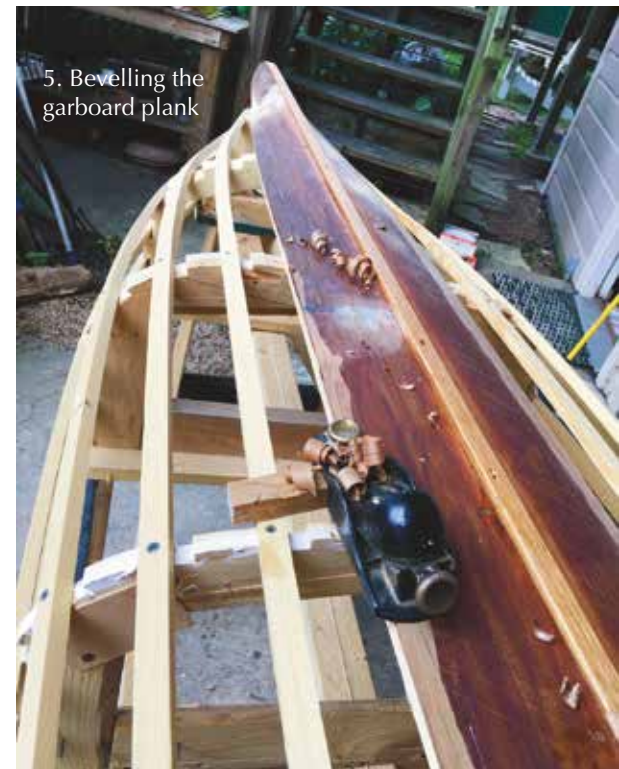
I found online stories of a few folks who had built versions of this boat. One builder ended up using his canoe as wall decoration in his house after his wife told him that when on the water he appeared to be sitting on a plank.



3. Stem attached to keel

I figured it was too small to be practical for me as well. I chose instead Rushton's plan for the Wee Lassie at 10ft 5 ¾ ins LOA, designed in 1893. It was a foot shorter than my smallest canoe.

Besides the line drawings and offsets, Markkula provided a few notes on wood types for various members such as keelson, ribs and stems. Also, in the book, 'Appendix B Further Notes on Construction,' Manley includes two letters written down by one of Rushton's sons, J. H. 'Harry' Rushton, in 1959. These letters cover his memories of various construction processes and



5. Bevelling the garboard plank

methods he and his father used in building the many boat designs they produced. These notes were very helpful, filling in gaps of information not covered in the drawings.

The notes can be confusing as they cover aspects used on a variety of boats and it is hard to follow which methods were used for which design. But most of the needed information is there.

Also very helpful were four or five monochrome and color photos of the existing boat in the Adirondack Experience collection sent to me by a very helpful Doreen Aless.

So in the fall of 2019 I built a work cart, a strongback and the station molds. I laminated an oak keel, mounted it to the molds and lined off the planks on the molds. I then laid longitudinal ribbands over the molds.

This was exciting for me. It would be the first time I would build a boat without plans or instructions – just line drawings, offsets, random notes written down 42 years after the Rushton enterprise shuttered up and a few photos of an existing original canoe.

It would be my first time building a boat with solid wood planks, too, instead of marine plywood. I would also, anxiously, develop a new skill – crimping copper tacks to join the ribs at the laps of the cedar planking.

I didn't get really involved with the project, however, until COVID kept me at home.

## The Wood

Not living near the Eastern Seaboard, getting white cedar is a real problem. I contacted a couple of suppliers in the East and the cost of shipping the wood to Texas was going to be as expensive as the cedar itself. Local suppliers here had clear Alaskan yellow cedar and western red cedar – as expensive as gold. There had to be alternatives.

On previous boats I used scarfed marine plywood making 24' wide panels from which to cut the curved strakes. The individual planks had quite an arc to them. Due to my incredible naivety, I had in my mind that this new boat would have straighter strakes and could be got out of one 12' piece of solid plank. Not so. The arced shapes would have to be made from scarfed planks to accommodate the great curvature – one or even two scarfs per plank.

Then I had the 'ah, ha!' moment. If I would be scarfing anyway, I wouldn't necessarily need clear lumber – I could work from regular lumber and find sections that were knot-free to fit between the scarfs. Perhaps, I could just go to the local building supply store and every now and then rummage through their stock of 1x6 cedar fencing for pieces with widely spaced knots. And so I did.

I had to learn to re-saw the 1x6s down to planks 3/16" thick using my old Sears Craftsman table saw purchased in 1980 – un-state-of-the-art technology.

The resulting boards weren't pretty, but they were good enough (a little planing – a little sanding.) Even with a 50% + tare rate I was still way ahead of the costs of clear lumber.

Markkula's drawings called out a bow stem of steamed ash and a stern stem from a natural spruce knee. Harry Rushton's notes/sketches show an inner and outer stem. Not wanting to deal with steam bending early on and not having any idea of where to find a 'spruce knee' I decided to splice (epoxy) the inner stems from two straight pieces of ash and the joining, curved section from a local Hill Country 'cedar' (juniper) tree – the gracefully curved section from the trunk down into the root.

The keelson/keel was laminated from building supply oak 1x2's and rabbited to accept the garboard strake (oak is hard to carve), and the inside stems were attached to



6. Ash stock prepared for ribs

the keel and to the strongback.

I liked the romance of the 'steam-bent ash' bow stem and the 'natural spruce knee' stern stem and this thinking led me to the idea of using local Bald Cypress for the outer stems. I knew of a woodworker in Bandera County (Fred Collins Workshop) who collected, stockpiled and made furniture from fallen Bald Cypress trees. The Medina River frequently floods and knocks down these majestic trees. After looking over hot, hilly, cedar-studded acres of three and four foot diameter logs, countless stacks of 3 and 4 inch table-top slabs, a wild, ratty ride on a couple of ATVs and watching some sketchy balancing acts with a fork lift, I ended up purchasing a small diameter section of trunk with a couple of hefty branches gracefully curving outward. From this I was able to fashion two beautiful, curved grain outer stems.

The ash rib material I purchased locally from the manicured array of exotic woods at the expensive hardwood store. The inwale and outwale were fashioned from scarfed scrap lumber (pine, spruce?).



7. Steam box



8. Bending in the ash ribs

## Building Challenges

The resawing of the 1x6 fencing down to 3/16" planks was a humbling experience – but it got done. To make the bevels for the many needed scarf joints I built a jig/track at the end of my work table for my circular saw – a design I found in *The Gougeon Brothers on Boat Building*, 5th edition. It did the job in spades.



9. Outer stem

The garboard planks gave me trouble and one cracked on me at the stem ends where the twist was greatest (an in-place scarf was required). The beveling of the planks was accomplished using Thomas Hill's method. Tracing the shape of the planks along the ribbands from the inside of the molds was not as accurate as I would have liked and required tweaks.

The Rushton method of joining the planks along the laps was to glue them with a thickened varnish followed by copper tacks clinched at every inch along the lap. I was reluctant to attempt all this tack clinching, especially since I had no experience with what seemed a brutal form of joinery on soft and fragile planks. I was also worried that the requisite number of tacks (not to mention those many more required to attach the ribs at each lap) would add too much weight to the boat. So, I, instead, opted for modern epoxy and clamps.



10. Breasthook

Wooden planks don't have both longitudinal and lateral dimensional stability like plywood, so the Rushton canoes and boats utilized ribs to compensate. Lots of ribs!

In the Wee Lassie there are 47 ribs.

47 ribs crammed into a little more than eight running feet. Steam bent! 1/2" diameter half round ash attached with clinched copper tacks – one at the keel and one at each plank lap...that's 11 tacks per rib times 47 = 517 clinchings. Accomplished while one is attempting to wrangle the hot, steaming rib tight into the varying curvatures of the hull without snapping it. Then quickly, before the wood has a chance to cool and set up, drilling fine pilot holes for the tack at each lap. Did I mention that all of this was on-the-job training? Also, while one's head is on the inside where the tack may or may not be emerging straight out of the rib in order to optimally position the clinching iron (did I mention learning to use a clinching iron?) one can't see the outside where one is simultaneously pounding the unseen tack head with a 16 oz. framing hammer and hopefully not against the lovingly created cedar plank! All the while hoping that



the rib doesn't split or snap. Some were broken until I got into the rhythm and feel of it all. Ribs split, tacks clinched askew, planks cracked and there were more than a few hammer dents. The 'adventure' of boat building, no?



## Finishing

After fitting the hot ribs with all the tack clinching (and teeth clenching) the rest of the construction was fairly straightforward. The fitting of outer stems is always a bit trying. I made the thwart out of round hardwood dowel as called for, although, it is not as elegant as a beautifully shaped one. I tried to shape the interior contour of the breast hooks as best I could judge

from the drawings and photos. I applied epoxy onto all the wood surfaces and wiped it back followed by a few coats of satin varnish. I chose against oval brass stem bands, again, in consideration of weight. For the painter attachment I used an eye strap instead of a ringbolt. The only concession to modernity was to add some eye straps to the interior for clipping in a kayak seat.

The boat came out to 10'- 5 3/8" in length, 3/8" less than the plan length, and 28" wide at the gunwales. This extra inch at the beam was, perhaps, due to the combined spring of the ribs against the sides.

## Performance

I had figured that squeegeeing epoxy over the hull inside and out would plug any leaks associated with the tack penetrations. Not so. The boat leaked like a purse seine on its maiden voyage (it's since been fixed.) But the boat performed elegantly and it is a beauty to behold. It sits low in the water as expected holding me and my equipment. It will serve now as my favorite Hill Country river fishing boat both for utility and looks.

There's something about traveling in and fishing from an elegant, ultralight, handbuilt wooden boat. Like fly fishing with a bamboo rod, perhaps. I won't be risking it on any Class IV rapids, however!

*(Thanks to Bob Hicks for sharing Kent's article with Dinghy Cruising, the journal of the DCA.) KR*



13. On the water



# A Dip into the DCA Facebook Page

## A Small Selection of Posts From the Last Few Months

Chosen by Jennifer Heney

**Colin Holt**      **3 Sep**

Here's a pic from our little cruise last weekend on the Menai Strait, North Wales...

The sun is setting after a lovely day on the water. The sausages and onions are sizzling on the meths burner. A beer is in the glass as the cool of the evening snatches the last of the day's warmth.

It will be dark before too long; the sea birds' cries are quieter as the flooding tide is swiftly approaching over the sands.

Supper is enjoyed and a pot of coffee follows. A period of activity is now needed to transform our little dinghy into a comfortable bed for the night. As we settle into our sleeping bags, we hear the water chuckling over the sands, we feel the hull lift and the anchor warp take the strain. We drift off into sleep with the sound of the sea gently slapping against the hull.

Soon, the sun will rise again and we will enjoy another splendid day on the water.

This is why we love cruising in small sailing boats, the intimacy with the elements and nature. The simplicity, the minimal cost of being at one with the seas, the tides, the weather and nature. One thing for sure, we just love dinghy cruising.... And I guess if you are reading this, so do you!

Nos da / Goodnight, from North Wales.

Photo credit goes to my wife Sue who took the photo while I was slaving over the stove cooking supper!



**Stephane Verreault**      **22 Aug**

Just came back from my first dinghy cruising adventure with my sixteen year old daughter Ava, it was an amazing six day trip from Montreal to Quebec City. We had so much fun, we are hooked! I thought I would share a bit of it with you guys.



*Ava obviously enjoying herself!*



*Stephane's boat is a Bombardier 4.8 m.*

**Buddy Simons**      **11 Aug**

*Buddy took his grandkids out on Lake Conroe in Texas.*



*The Grandmonsters had fun yesterday (until I told them it was time to go home) then they were 'angry'!*

**Allan Yates 27 July**

For cruising with my Wayfarer I carry a grapnel anchor, with 6' of chain and 150' of rode. It used to live in a plastic bucket, but that was awkward. This attempt, which worked out well, was a bag from Anchor Buddies. I fabricated a sleeve from foam rubber to keep the anchor and chain contained such that they wouldn't bang against my wooden hull. Works much better!



**Vince Baker** Nice, does the bitter end come through a hole in the bottom of the bag?

**Allan Yates** Yep!



**Justin Scott 16 Aug**

Well, the last time I was here I was 13 years old. It's taken me 37 years to find Robins Rock. Tucked away on a small island behind Belle Isle, Windermere. Knee deep to walk to and 12ft deep on the other side. That's my son – he just happens to be 13 years old now.



**Jørgen Magnus 24 Aug**

The spirit of dinghy cruising and the art of the old wooden boat tradition is growing here on the west coast of Norway. Last weekend we had a gathering of about 25 traditional small boats, and about twice as many people. Three days exploring the waters in an area just north of Bergen, learning about boats, culture and history along the coast. Here are a few images and a link to a short film from this unforgettable trip: [https://youtu.be/ll6dAq\\_zMLk](https://youtu.be/ll6dAq_zMLk)



**Manuel Panzera 29 Aug**

You can sleep on the foreshore (of Thorney Island).. be prepared to wait a long time for the tide and don't miss your opportunity to slip away. We were afloat for less than 2 hours. And we'll have a 15 minute walk to the water edge now.



**Roy Schreyer 16 Sep**

Enjoyed my 60th birthday with my lovely bride, Dianne and our tiny houseboat, DIANNE'S ROSE that we have been cruising for 9 years now. Nature gave me the best gift when we woke up...



**Dick Houghton 25-31 Aug**

*Dick and Carol spent several days cruising the lower Clyde in their Loch Broom Post Boat.*



We caught mackerel within 20 mins of launching at Cardwell Bay in the Firth of Clyde.



Camping in our boat tent moored on the Isle of Bute.



Not quite 'gloating' (the boating version of glamping) but pretty good.

**Brian Anderson 15 Sep**

Cruise on the Canal du Midi in France last week. There were some pretty spectacular bits, and not too many hired houseboats playing bumper cars because of the pandemic. Carcassone to Arles in a week, and then a train back to Carcassone to get my car and trailer.



*Sunrise in the Camargue*

Really it would be best to do it in a larger boat though, I think, at least the inland stretches, as the banks and dikes of the canal were high enough to block many of the good views along the way in a dinghy cruiser. On the upper decks of the houseboats though, a lot more would have been visible. Here's the boat on it's usual cruising grounds, the Loire River. It's self-designed and built, 4.5 x 1.1 metres.



**Howard Bibby 14 Aug**

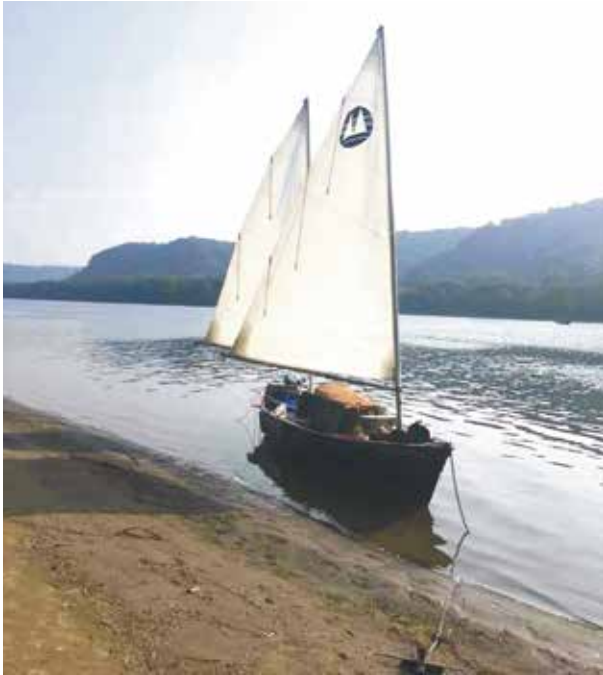
I'm a watercolour artist, recently moved to the Lake District, now saving for a Tideway. Thought I would paint one (Roger Barnes' old *Baggywrinkle*) and give it an Arthur Ransome feel..... hope you like it.



Howard will paint commissions and has a growing selection of prints available for sale. You can contact him via Facebook or by email at [howardbibby@gmail.com](mailto:howardbibby@gmail.com)

**Brian Weber 11 Jul – 27 August**

Throughout July and August Brian took us on an expedition around the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers in his Sea Pearl. He called it his 'Buck Finn' adventure... Why Buck Finn and not Huck Finn? Well 'B' is for Brian. Just be thankful my name isn't Frank!



Day 11 The Mississippi has some unknowns for me so I am stowing gear, sorting needs and wants on the boat. Pretty cool morning with the fog; barges using their horns, sending a warning they were on the move. No way to see them as it was thick as cotton fog. I tell you this, the river is thriving; I've never seen so much wildlife. The frequent sightings of beaver, you'd think I would get a good picture.



Day 12 It's easy to understand Mark Twain's fascination with the Mississippi River and his satire and amusement with everything else. This river is magical at its core. It keeps you humble.

Brian did manage a picture of some pelicans on the Mississippi:



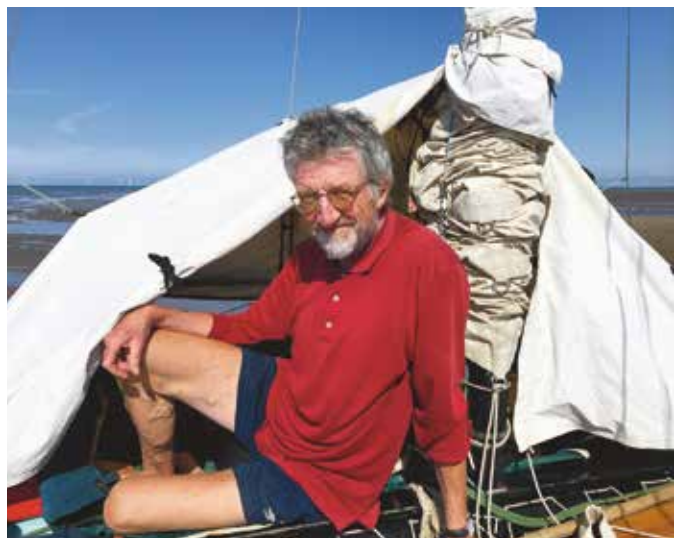
**John Hughes 19 Sep**

There is no need to travel to exotic places to find great adventure. Great adventure can be found close to home on a small open boat. And the smaller the boat, the greater the adventure.

The challenge of exploring the sea coasts is ever absorbing. The perturbations of wind and tide and their effects on the surface movement of the water and its interaction with the shore are infinitely variable. And to exploit these movements of sea and air to determine the shape of your journey, to depend on them entirely, with perhaps some occasional assistance from your own strength with a paddle, although sometimes daunting, is always immensely satisfying.

You are constantly occupied in judging the conditions, anticipating possible change, weighing the objective dangers against your ability to cope, and you are continually assessing the risks to ensure that the probabilities are stacked in your favour (and hoping that they will remain so). It is a challenge of the mind as much as anything physical.

This year so far there have been 51 days on which I have been out under sail on one boat or another. And of those 51 days, I have spent 18 nights afloat at anchor aboard my catamaran *Star Catcher*. It has been a good season, yet it is still September and not yet past the equinox, so there is still time for more!



# A Tale of Three Traditional Boats

~ Mike Morris

## Part 2: The Arctic Tern

**A**FTER MORE THAN A DECADE OF USE, I decided that the currach didn't meet all my boating needs. It is really a rowboat which can take a sail in favourable conditions, and I wanted a proper sail and oar boat. Also, I hankered after something larger to accommodate friends and family, more stable and seaworthy to undertake somewhat more adventurous outings, and with space for 2 to sleep on board. In 2015, when I was given early redundancy, I felt justified in allocating a chunk of my lump sum to a new boat, and after a thorough reading of *The Cruising Dinghy*, by Roger Barnes, I was ready to begin my search.

Surprisingly, the process of researching, commissioning and fitting out my new boat proved to be one of the most rewarding aspects of my boating life so far.

I was lucky to be able to draw on the advice and experience of two stalwarts of the DCA, John Hughes and Keith Muscott. For several months I bombarded them and other DCA members with questions about various options. My first thought was to get a traditional clinker boat, possibly one in need of restoration, but I was steered wisely towards the more modern style of cruising boat better suited to towing, dry storage, recreational usage and easier/safer recovery after capsize. I was very tempted by some of the GRP cruising dinghies advertised by DCA members, but really wanted something that I could readily row and which had a more traditional lineage.



Mike's Arctic Tern, ready to row on the River Dee

Eventually I settled on an Iain Oughtred Arctic Tern; DCA members may be familiar with her larger cousin, the Ness Yawl, which has been a long-standing presence on many DCA meets. She is 18ft long, has a beam of



The wooden kabs can be seen in the rowing positions. The detachable support for the bow dodger is also visible

5ft 2in and a weight of about 240 lbs. I had been very taken with the looks and heritage of the small Shetland workboat during a visit to the Shetland boat museum in the 2000s: double-enders in the Scandinavian tradition adapted to local needs, conditions and building methods. A general history of the type is given in 'Traditional Boats of Shetland' by Alison Munro (2012), whilst the considerable qualities and benefits of lapstrake plywood construction for a modern wooden boat are set out in Iain Oughtred's *Clinker Plywood Boatbuilding Manual* (1988). I was also enthralled by some of the web publications and YouTube videos featuring the Arctic Tern, particularly a review by the aptly named Bruce Bateau (from *Small Boats Magazine* 2016). These extolled her capacity, sailing and rowing qualities, and ease of righting after capsize.



Note square section oars and thole pin with rope grommet

I commissioned Meitheal Mara, the boatyard in Cork who made the currach, to build her. The materials were



The big trailer, made by Cork Trailers

bought from Robbins Timber and the paint from Jotun. She has an open hull (omitting built-in flotation chambers and side benches). I opted for oiled gunwhales, keel and thwart, plus the 'traditional' painted hull interior rather than varnish.

Much effort was put into making the oars as authentic as possible, and I was greatly helped by Marc Chivers, who was then working on his PhD – 'Shetland Vernacular Boats 1500-2000' (Aberdeen University 2017). Initially I also tried the traditional rowlocks of rope held by a stout wooden post known as a kabe but found this system problematic so I bodged sets of simple thole pins in the manner of the currach, which work very well.



James Lawrence provided the sails (*above*) and I found their service faultless and the sails beautiful. She has a balanced lugsail main with leg o' mutton mizzen. I chose a cream colour in their clipper fabric, which is a soft, natural-feeling material. The trailer was from Cork Trailers and is high quality yet very reasonably priced.

The Arctic Tern's maiden voyage was in 2016 on the River Lee in Cork during which Bill (the boatwright), Cathy (the manager of Methail Mara) and myself nearly collided with a huge (but thankfully moored) freighter.

So how have I found her in use? Yes, she is larger and more stable than the currach. She also rows very well; single-handed is fine but she comes into her own with 2 rowers and with the false keel she tracks very well. Towing and launching is relatively easy although the trailer is somewhat large for her size.

Sailing her is a different matter however and as with my other sailing craft, my skill level falls well below her capabilities. Also, double-enders with a vee-shaped hull are much less roomy than the equivalent length flat-



Seagull outboard and the reinforced wooden cross beam

bottomed transomed dinghy. Thus, despite her 18ft plus length, and contrary to Bruce Bateau's assessment, fully fitted out for sailing with the centreboard box, water ballast and flotation containers aboard plus oars and possibly outboard, there is little room aboard for me let alone spouse and dog. Needless to say I didn't even try to fit her out for boat camping.

As far as using an outboard goes, although an internal well is an option in the plans, I chose not to compromise her lines. The longshaft 40-plus Seagull I purchased for the currach just about works mounted on a removable Heath-Robinson cross-bracket I've attached to the stern seat, but cavitation is a problem in choppy conditions.

For weekly rows on the River Dee with my wife, I prefer the currach, as she is easier to launch and lighter to row. With hindsight, I was seduced by the romance of the Scandinavian/Shetland tradition, the cachet of the Iain Oughtred name, and last but not least, the sheer elegance of the vessel.

Despite the drawbacks, I don't regret commissioning her. The process of selection, watching the build (mainly via laptop screen) and then fitting her out was fascinating, and she has provided much pleasure, particularly during holidays with the extended family on Coniston. Neither do I regret any of my fitting-out choices and have enjoyed customising her to best suit my needs. Whilst I could change her for a proper wide-beamed cruising dinghy fully fitted out for boat camping, etc., for half the price or less, I haven't yet come across another boat I'd rather have. For the committed dinghy sailor I think the Oughtred Arctic Tern would make an excellent sail and oar boat for adventurous day trips. *MM*



Fully loaded on Coniston



# Shetland

## Hafren's Viking Adventure

Sunset at Mousa

By Wayfarer dinghy to Shetland: Jeremy Warren, Jonathan Ferguson and Roger Morton

### Day 0, June 6, 2021

**Jonathan:** I sat in an empty train carriage, watching the countryside fly past. The train was headed to Stafford, somewhere that a week earlier I had no idea I'd be heading to. In fact, I had no idea I'd be sailing at all...

It all began with a desperate cry for help from Jeremy Warren. Suddenly without a crew for his summer jaunt, he needed someone at short notice who'd be willing to spend a week sailing in Scotland. I agreed in a heartbeat.

**Jeremy:** We'd all agree that crew dynamics are critical for going offshore in a 5m dinghy. And with a week to go my co-skipper had an acute work tizzy, which comes with operating radiation monitoring for US government nuclear facilities. Surely a rubbish job, especially if it threatens our sailing plans? Consequently, and with increasing desperation, I called about six people who I had previously sailed with and where it has not gone so badly they expressed an intent never to come again. I even asked my wife.

Our mutual friend Matt Sharman suggested Jonathan, for which my warmest thanks. I had never met Jonathan, let alone sailed with him, but had heard his lively sailing talks online. And here he was, unhesitatingly volunteering to undertake a daunting passage with this creaky old man: I'm 63 and Jonathan is my son's age. In retrospect, it is hard to believe it went so well.

**Jonathan:** Jeremy picked me up from Stafford and the decision to go for Shetland was taken around Preston. The weather looked good, the nav prep was in the bag

and the distances to Orkney and Shetland were certainly achievable for a well-prepared Wayfarer.

Jeremy has vast offshore experience, much in *Hafren*. I lacked this – I had lots of experience around Suffolk and Essex onboard my own Wayfarer, *Allegro*, but nothing quite as bold as this. I was keen to be adventurous on this trip though, to make the most of learning from Jeremy, and we decided we'd quite like to do some overnight sailing (as this was new to me).

Our road journey was eventful enough; fortunately, we noticed an underinflated trailer tyre was vibrating, and with a new one in place, by dusk we were at Inverness. Despite the delay, we had made much better progress than expected and were rewarded with a fantastic evening drive through the Highlands; the mountainous and coastal scenery along the A9 was a treat in itself.

We'd planned to overnight at a campsite 30 miles south of Wick. On the phone we'd warned the owners that we'd arrive late and depart early, and they were very accommodating. By late evening, Jeremy (who had driven the whole way) was getting tired, and we were relieved to reach the campsite shortly before midnight. Our first 'team building' task went well enough: we erected two tiny tents by the light of our headtorches, without waking the other campers.

### Day 1

**Jonathan:** we left the campsite before anybody woke up. Knowing Wick had no dinghy slipway we had identified two potential launch villages to the north. The nearest was Staxigoe, and to our delight we arrived to find an

accessible concrete slipway straight into a picture-postcard fishing harbour.

The plan was to depart from Staxigoe and head northeast, such that we'd be outside the danger zone of being sucked into the Pentland Firth on the ebb. The Firth is known for being a daunting stretch of water, with immense tidal speeds through a very narrow channel between Orkney and the mainland creating tumultuous conditions in adverse weather. *Hafren* carries no engine, and the forecast was for southeasterly Force 2-3, so we reasoned that we should stay well clear of the Pentland Skerries to avoid inadvertently drifting in, should the wind die. We would then head up the eastern edge of Orkney, with our sights set on Shetland – just shy of 100NM away.

We had hoped to find a friendly local with whom we could store the car and trailer. At the first farmhouse we knocked up we were lucky enough to meet John Bray. John was a coastguard in his former life, and a sailor too. He told us that the Pentland Firth would be 'a pussy cat' in these calm conditions and reassured us that being sucked through it would be more of an inconvenience than a danger! He kindly agreed to store our car and trailer, and what's more, he came down with his sea kayak and accompanied us out on the start of our voyage. Thank you, John.



*Jonathan resealed the self-bailers with Vaseline – and it worked!*

Out of Staxigoe the light winds meant John was easily keeping pace with us, and we discussed options with him for finding a bay on the mainland near John O'Groats, to stay overnight if the wind continued to die. Not far from the bay that John had recommended, and with an ever-decreasing wind strength, we were fairly sure that we wouldn't be making an overnight passage after all – but then, gently, a breeze picked up from a slightly more northerly direction. We decided to take the opportunity and set our course once again to take us well east of the Pentland Skerries, and onwards towards Shetland. I did a livestream for the Facebook Wayfarer Dinghy Group, sharing the sights and sounds of the variety of marine life surrounding us.

Outbound red, inbound blue



Some hours later, we were to the east of the skerries, and the wind and light were fading. Jeremy stayed on watch while I slept soundly on the floorboards – setting a trend of easy sleeping on board.

## Day 2

**Jonathan:** I came on watch at about 0100, now experiencing my first night sailing in a Wayfarer. In these latitudes, around the Solstice, it is only dark from 2300, and at 0300 you can read the brand label on a whisky bottle, even if you can't see the small print. Initially it was cold, but once I started to move around again, I was soon warming up nicely under my oilskins. We had a cloudless night, and the lights of the Pentland Skerries and on Orkney were clearly visible. I sat for about an hour, not really helming since the boat wasn't making any forward progress, but just enjoying being there.

At around 0200, the mainsheet gently tugged, and the sails slowly began to fill. I could make out ripples on the moonlit surface of the water. Blissfully, a gentle but steady southeasterly set in, and I had to do little more than sit comfortably on the floorboards while *Hafren* slid through the night. The perception of the passage of time is altered at night, and it seemed like only a few minutes

Why doesn't Jonathan look apprehensive, with that long night ahead ?





later that the sky was now pale blue. Now half-way up Orkney, I could see a bright glow just below the horizon on the compass course I was steering. As we sailed along, this glow rose into the sky – possibly the most beautiful sunrise I’ve ever seen – and I was able to steer straight for it.

By early morning the sun was warming us nicely, and the wind had risen to a steady Force 3. I elected to leave Jeremy asleep for as long as I could, since I was not tired, rather, I was enjoying the idyllic conditions. He awoke at around 7am, made breakfast, and took over the helm a short time later, ending my 6-hour stint. I settled down on the floorboards for some well-earned and peaceful rest.

**Jeremy:** This was a heroic first night watch for Jonathan; sleep is an incomparable gift when sailing 2-handed, and he gave me six luxurious hours.

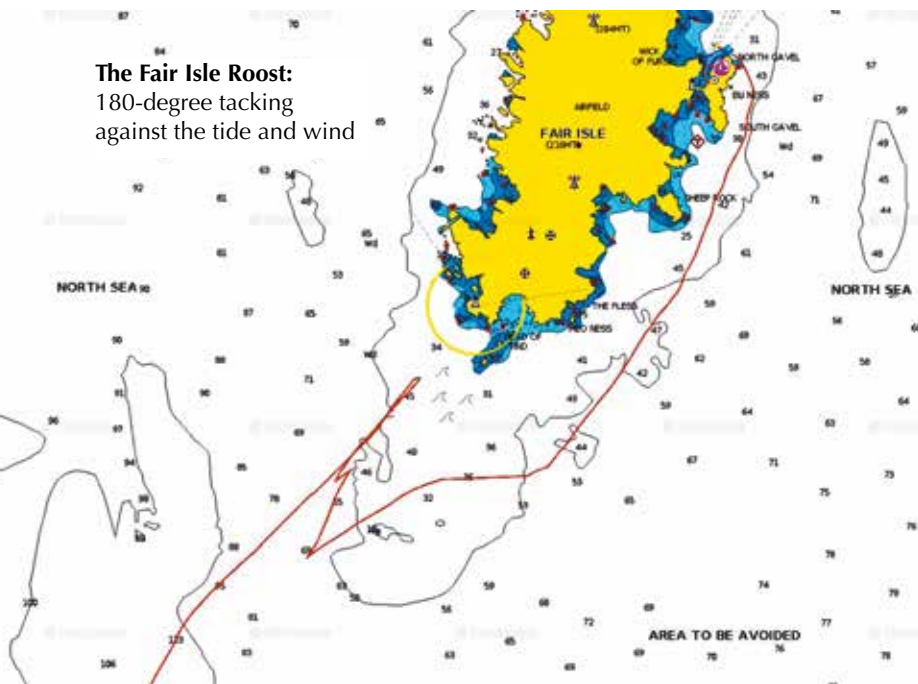
**Jonathan:** The rest of the day was uneventful, with the wind picking up to a Force 4 at times but remaining on our beam. Both of us felt comfortable on the boat, and our initial thought was that continuing to Shetland was the obvious option – however, 20nm south of it lies the island of Fair Isle. This island, only 3 miles in length itself, is home to only around 60 humans, but copious numbers of seabirds.



Jeremy: Jetboil even has a filter coffee press!

With a sheltered north-facing bay on the east side of the island, it was an easy decision to make a stop there on the way, to experience this wonderful place. We flew along at a good pace, encountering moderate seas which *Hafren* rode without complaint. After a couple more watch changes, I was once again comatose on the floorboards, when at around 1500

**The Fair Isle Roost:**  
180-degree tacking  
against the tide and wind



Jeremy woke me. I gathered my senses whilst Jeremy explained, sheepishly, that we were now in the tide race ('roost' in Scotland) south of Fair Isle. This roost forms as the clockwise current squeezes around the southern tip of Fair Isle. The sea state was a tad rougher but not alarming, but the issue was our progress northeastwards against a couple of knots of southwesterly tide.

Jeremy had been pointing as high as he could into the northeasterly wind, and for the last half hour it had looked like we'd just scrape past the bottom of the island. Unfortunately, the strength of the tide caught him out as it accelerated around the corner, and within about ten minutes we had been swept sideways to a point west of Fair Isle. Beating in wind that was beginning to die, the GPS confirmed the bad news, that our tacking angle over the ground was 180 degrees! (as the track graphic shows). Not much choice but to stay on the southerly tack for a while, retracing our path to get out of the fast tide close to the island, before tacking far out to the east to make our approach to the anchorage of North Haven.

**Jeremy:** I'd made a dumb mistake and misjudged the strength of the stream for our approach; a mile further east (after 80 miles sailing!) and Jonathan could have stayed asleep. As it was, he helmed resolutely in the sloppy sea and with a dying breeze.

(Below) Fair Isle: Us, Charlie and the Shetland ferry



**Jonathan:** By 1700 we were making good progress up the spectacular rocky coast of the island. We sailed close in, watched by seabirds perched atop the cliffs which towered above us. Before long we rounded the corner into North Haven. In front of us stretched a sandy beach which could have come straight out of a Mediterranean holiday advert; to our right sheep and seabirds were spread across the rolling grassy slopes of the island, and to our left lay the quay. Moored here were the Shetland ferry (a converted commercial fishing vessel) and a lone yacht. Not fancying our chances against the tall stone jetty, we rafted alongside the yacht, whose skipper promptly invited us aboard. Charlie was here alone, having sailed over from the Scottish mainland, a trip he makes relatively often to escape to this beautiful area.

We spent the evening chatting and eating and feeling very happy to have made it this far. Fair Isle, as in the shipping forecast.

### Day 3

We woke at 0630. Dense fog enveloped the island; not a surprise, as it does so for seven days a month during June, and although his AIS showed no traffic, the skipper of the Shetland ferry was concerned for us. The last 20NM is 'The Hole' and, along with the roost at Sumburgh Head, the southerly tip of Shetland, it is a daunting and lonely stretch of North Sea. We later learned that fishermen used to drag their boats overland on a road of whale bones to avoid Sumburgh's roost. We reassured him a little by leaving behind him and at 0700 we paddled out of the harbour.

The wind was a southeasterly Force 4, which gave us good speed under spinnaker over the 3m swell straight towards the day's destination of Shetland itself. I ticked off another first – sailing in fog – spending the entire passage in no more than 200m visibility. Without AIS or radar, we rely on hearing to detect shipping, and several times we heard engines. All these transpired to be aircraft passing overhead, but it gave rise to a productive discussion about the effect of actually being involved in a collision. We reasoned that whilst we may not be able to reliably stay well clear of shipping, we would have enough time with five knots of boat speed to get away from a vessel providing we saw it as soon

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Sumburgh Head emerges through the fog

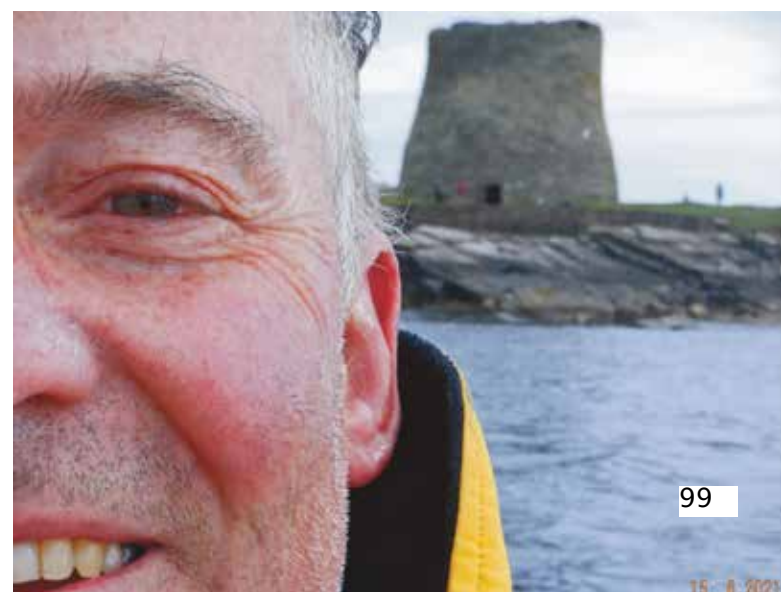


*Hafren* with one reef tied in



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Jeremy approaching the broch on Mousa Island



as it was visible. Furthermore, were we to actually collide, the bow wave of the approaching vessel would likely push us aside and bounce us along the hull of the vessel – not a nice experience, but probably not likely to lead to an immediate sinking. Anyway, that was our hypothesis.

By 1400 we were reaching the tip of Shetland. Whilst I was asleep on the floorboards, Jeremy took us into the harbour of Grutness Voe, just by Sumburgh, waking me as we turned into the bay, with rocks once again on either side. The GPS chart plotter was invaluable for this, as making an unfamiliar landfall in the fog would be simply too dangerous with conventional methods. We stopped at the pontoon of the Ness Boating Club, took some celebratory photos, and assessed our surroundings. With plenty of time left in the day we wanted to keep going, so we headed back out and up the coast in the direction of Shetland's capital, Lerwick.

About 10 miles up the east side of Shetland lies the small and uninhabited island of Mousa; it was here we were to spend the night. Shrouded by the fog, which had hung with us all day, again the chart plotter did its stuff. Once anchored, the fog began to lift and the sun broke through, warming us and illuminating idyllic surroundings including a fortified tower. The Vikings used Shetland as



Bressay anchorage, before the rain came

a raiding base for the UK and Ireland, and as a stop on their journeys further west. But this fort, The Broch of Mousa, is more than 2,000 years old, which makes it as old to the Vikings as they are to us.

Jeremy had purchased a new toy before this voyage – a small toy inflatable, £16 on eBay! After 10 minutes of pumping, the inflatable was rigid, and I was volunteered as guinea pig. The test was mercifully successful, and I was able to row it at a reasonable pace. Tethering it to *Hafren* with a long rope was essential though, since the wind would take it very quickly across the bay if I stopped rowing! Gingerly, Jeremy joined me in the tender, along with our Jetboil, water, food and beer, which we would consume ashore.

Avoiding the urchins just underwater on the pebble beach we landed and set off up to the summit of the island. The view from the top was genuinely magical round the 360-degree horizon. This was a view so many seafarers must have taken in. We could see the stunning coastline of Shetland; the hills, beaches and lagoons on Mousa; the North Sea, seals, seabirds and a layer of low-lying fog from which the tops of mountains poked out above. We were all alone and very tired. We thoroughly enjoyed our celebratory dehydrated meal.



(Above) Mousa to ourselves  
(Below) Lerwick: big boat, little boat.  
The crew of the 55ft yacht stayed in a hotel



## Day 4

We woke to a glorious sunny morning, having a relative lie-in. Having just been ashore in the tender, Jeremy made the unfortunate mistake of letting go of the painter, and it drifted precariously towards the shore at an alarming rate! After some unpublishable utterances, Jeremy bravely stripped down and launched himself into the water to swim after it. Fortunately, Jeremy has experience of cold-water swimming, since it was not particularly warm!

At 1100 we weighed anchor and set off. Our destination was Lerwick, about 10nm up the coast on a broad reach. The wind was a fresh F4, and with *Hafren's* oversized spinnaker set, we flew along. The wind strengthened as it funnelled into Bressay sound, with Lerwick to port.

Jeremy was keen to come in with the kite flying, so we kept it up for as long as possible. At one point, the wind gusted very forcefully, and the boat lifted onto a very fast plane – this was definitely the fastest I'd ever been in a Wayfarer! After this, needing to gybe, we both decided it would be prudent to drop the kite, and continued our way into Lerwick harbour without it. A replica Viking ship guarded the approach to the harbour.

We reached the visitors' pontoon at 1400, where we made ourselves known at the office and met some of the other sailors tied up there. We'd made it to Lerwick in a little over 3 days, and I'd had a lot of firsts while we were at it. More importantly though, we'd had a fun time doing it all, in conditions that were suitable and around stunning scenery. A fantastic trip, as a result of good planning, organisation and decision making. *JF*

## Day 8

**Jeremy:** I had a few days between Jonathan leaving and Roger's arrival, with very little to do as the boat had performed well, meaning nothing had broken. Lerwick is a significant commercial port with a pontoon for visiting yachts. In the work-up to this trip, I'd read the logbook, from the Wayfarer archives, of Jerry Eardley and Pat Dollard's Shetland trip in *Sea Thrift*, twenty-five years earlier. So I was delighted when Leslie Irvine introduced himself. Leslie is a highly experienced offshore yachtsman and a Shetland local, and when *Sea Thrift*, the only other Wayfarer to make it to Shetland (as far as we've heard), was stormbound, she overwintered in Leslie's back garden.

Roger arrived off the Aberdeen overnight ferry, on Sunday 13 June, to pouring rain and a gusty southwesterly Force 5. Roger is my age, we've sailed together in big boats, and he's done plenty on *Hafren*, including a trip across to Ireland last year. Roger's enthusiasm and his energy banished any lethargy I was feeling, and after a trip to Tesco, we were ready to go. The next few days were going to be SW F5-7, so we weren't going back to

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Yes, I now know Roger is 'pulling against the advantage'



Roger on *Hafren* passing Bressay, just out of Lerwick

Scotland quite yet, but Roger wasn't going to have us hide in Lerwick, with its friendly yacht club, interesting restaurants and dozens (dozens!) of warm pubs. No, it was outdoors for us. Leslie indicated lots of sheltered bays around the northeast side of Bressay island, no more than 5NM from Lerwick.

We were seen off by Miranda Delmar-Morgan and her partner Edward; they had kindly welcomed me aboard their floating home for supper when I was on my own, a lovely fifty-foot cruising yacht. When I next heard from them, they were on Scotland's west coast, notching up a decent distance daily.

As we left Lerwick harbour and turned north it was obvious that one reef was insufficient, with the wind hammering down the sound between Bressay and Shetland and the boat tearing along. With a second reef we had better control. The grey sea and complete absence of other vessels gave Roger a rapid baptism of northern waters sailing. Leslie had indicated plenty of anchoring spots sheltered from the sea in a southwesterly, but we also sought shelter from the wind, and a bit of sand if we could find it. Google Earth had given us some clues.

In the first big voe on Bressay was a fifty-foot cruising yacht at anchor, a really tough-looking aluminium beast with what turned out to be a massively powerful carbon rig, and a thirteen-foot keel with a monster lead torpedo at the bottom.

Essentially *Kraken* is a full-size version of a model yacht, with everything carbon including the dinghy. Very impressed. As we crossed her stern, Aussie skipper Guy unhesitatingly invited us aboard.

We learned that if you are a carbon spar designer and going to go offshore short-handed, in high latitudes, then *Kraken* is what you build for yourself. He and partner Alison had been everywhere, including Scandinavia and South America.



Pretty cool that these guys were still in their pyjamas, at three in the afternoon, with the wind howling down the Voe; such is the capability of an immaculately laid out yacht with an enclosed doghouse.

Suitably refreshed with tea and freshly-baked rhubarb muffins, we set off to find a refuge from both sea and wind, in anticipation of more wind. Three voes later we found a 20m patch of perfect white sandy beach hemmed by rocks, with crystal clear water, in the lee of high ground, with nobody in sight; the sort of place you only get to in a dinghy.

We did a little haul-out experiment with our new inflatable boat rollers; three 2m x 0.4m sausages. Using the mainsheet purchase to prusik up the bow line, and hauling out stern-first, this was an easy pull, on hard sand and with only a gentle slope. So, if a gale turned up we could pull the boat out. However, as we were not now going anywhere for at least two days, it was nice to stay afloat.

We put out a long kedge to seaward and tied the bow to a fence post, just metres off the beach. Boat tent up, Jetboil on. And what an amazing view of blue water, mountains on the far side of the bay and nobody around, just us. With only fore and aft moorings and with wind coming down the boat, as one would anticipate, she did weave back and forth all night.

Safe as this was, next day we walked over to the ferry, nipped back into Lerwick and bought 100m of 8mm nylon warp, so the next night we sat tight with the bow braced on two nicely spread shorelines and the kedge bar-tight. It blew and it poured all next day. In our boat tent, snuggled in bivvy bags, on thick Karrimat, with coffee and whisky, we could not have been cosier. Well, except maybe aboard *Kraken*.

## Day 10

A weather window was emerging; we might just make it back. On Tuesday we sailed clockwise around Bressay,

Jeremy and Roger attempt to dry out under *Hafren's* tent



Jeremy makes lunch. Note the big steering compass – a real boon

through the gap Leslie had assured us was a safe passage between Bressay and Noss. We were watched by a crowd of several hundred cormorants as we slipped through the narrow gap, and in a southwest F2 we got down to Sumburgh, the southern tip of Shetland, to the Grutness Voe Boat Club where Jonathan and I had first made landfall. A strip wash at the cold tap in the car park, a long walk around the airport perimeter for a decent meal in a big hotel, then back to *Hafren* and more sleep.

## Day 11

On Wednesday morning it was just too windy to leave. A bus trip to Lerwick got us fully provisioned for a 1700 departure. First lesson from this return trip; rig for the conditions you have, not those you anticipate. We feared it would be pretty windy outside the shelter of Grutness, then found we could hardly sail at all with two reefs in. We ended up banging back and forth between the pontoons whilst getting away. The local fishermen, who already thought we were daft, must have added incompetent to their assessment.

And so a long sail began. As we left Shetland behind there was only 3 or 4 knots of wind, on the nose, but the left-over swell was still 3m. In the long swell the sails slatted back and forth, to the extent we even rolled up the genoa. The tacking angle was more than 130 degrees. A secondary swell at about sixty degrees made for a chaotic sea. The lumpy sea, in the dark, brought on

a bout of seasickness for Roger but soon after he was recovered and making a round of teas on the Jetboil.

On two occasions the boat fell sideways and crashed down a metre into a trough where the two swells had conspired to create a hole in the sea. We only made about 50 miles over the course of the next 30 hours. Yep, less than 2 knots, half of the 3.7 knots we use as a rule of thumb. This painfully slow progress is clear from the track graphic (the blue line), where you can see the passage of six tides as sinusoidal cross-track, one way then the other. With so little wind and neap tides, the Sumburgh roost did not show. Fair Isle is more than 200m high, so we were to see it for the next 2 days. We did not see a single other vessel for the full 30 hours.

We made a clear error in relying on XCWeather.com forecasts. These snap-shot lists do not provide the overview one gets from the moving isobars on, for example, WINDY.com, which provide clarity and an overview of the weather systems. WINDY would have shown us the windless gap between two depressions which stayed with us for that first day. Lesson learned, rather painfully; we should have left later.

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Jeremy returns to Staxigoe with Roger, flying the banners of Scotland and Shetland



## Day 12

All day drifting around. Then, gloriously, whilst Roger was helming, at 2200 the wind filled from the southwest at F4. We were then 20nm south of Fair Isle and 20nm east of Orkney and could just lay our destination port on starboard tack. One reef, then two for the night watches.

I suppose the intensity of the pleasure from feeling the boat really move comes in part from having to wait so long? It was wonderful, glorious.

## Day 13

The wind veered and the spinnaker went up with the dawn. Fabulous. We were 12nm east of the Pentland Skerries when the wind died again. The tide grabbed us and drew us a full 9nm in toward the Pentland Firth.

It would not have been particularly hazardous to get sucked through the Merry Men of Mey, on neaps with no wind, but fortunately our prudently easterly position prevented that. When a light breeze did fill in, we made the last miles very slowly. For an hour or so we shadowed a fishing vessel hauling nets. Its crew gave us a cheery wave and enquired about our trip. We finally arrived back in Staxigoe at 1400. And John Bray was there with cold beers for our arrival.

Wayfarer, thanks again. A wonderful offshore boat.

Everything worked: Jetboil stove, dehydrated food (Expedition foods), big steering compass (Silva 100), roller genoa (Aeroluff), boat tent (also Aeroluff), GPS (Garmin 278cx), ground tackle (4kg Danforth, 8m of chain). Our new handheld AIS VHF radio (iCom M94DE, which Roger bought) is especially comforting as it ensures we can track any larger vessels in our area, even in poor visibility. It also alarms if it spots a vessel on a collision course with *Hafren*. Alas it does not transmit our position; surely soon a handheld AIS transponder will be available?

Next time, we'd spend more time around Shetland; it was striking and stark in its isolation and beauty. And the people were lovely. And next time, we'll maybe even get to see Orkney, instead of just whizzing by. *JW*

**Roger:** As always, it was a pleasure sailing with Jeremy. What he didn't mention above was that he did this whole expedition with an untreated hernia that he sustained while building a wall a few weeks earlier at his house! He never complained and just shoved everything back into position on a regular basis. Thankfully he has now been operated upon and is on the mend, ready for our next adventure! *RM*

# DCA Shop

The DCA Shop stocks a range of items carrying DCA branding, which can be purchased by members of the Association. The Shop is run by Liz Baker. If you are based in the UK and would like to buy something from the shop, please download and complete the order form which can be found on the DCA website at: [dinghycruising.org.uk/dca-shop](http://dinghycruising.org.uk/dca-shop). Then send it, together with a cheque made out to the Dinghy Cruising Association, to Liz at the address given on the form. Prices include postage and packing to UK members. Overseas members will be charged extra for postage and should contact Liz, using the contact details available on the order form, to find out how much to pay before ordering. Use of Paypal is accepted from overseas members.



Car sticker

## DCA Mugs



Liz Baker – [bakerwestfield@mail.com](mailto:bakerwestfield@mail.com)

The mugs have the DCA burgee on one side and on the other a photograph of members' boats beached at Long Island during a daysail in Langstone Harbour.

Two types of mug are available: one is the usual straight-sided pottery variety which is dishwasher proof and a similar one in Melamine plastic, unbreakable but probably not dishwasher proof.

Price for either type: £8.00

## Burgees and Badges

DCA Burgee: Made of nylon - white triangle on blue background, yellow tail. They have an open hem which can be slipped over a small staff and two loops.

Large burgee - 8 ins x 16 ins	£10.00
Small burgee - 6 ins x 11 ins	£8.00



Lapel badge / brooch:	Hard enamel with DCA burgee	£5.00
Cloth badge:	63 mm x 48 mm oval woven badge with DCA burgee on dark blue background	£3.00
Boat sticker:	Round, 90 mm diameter, with colour DCA badge	£3.00
Car sticker:	As boat sticker but for attaching to any glass window	£3.00

## Hats, Sweatshirts and Polo shirts

Baseball cap with badge:	Navy blue cotton with DCA printed badge in white, size adjustable	£8.00
Baseball cap, no badge:	As above but plain to enable you to sew on a cloth badge if you prefer	£3.00

Sweatshirts: Navy blue, white DCA badge £17.00

The following sizes are available:

Small	36-38" chest
Medium	38 - 40" chest
Large	40 - 42" chest
Extra large	44 - 46" chest
XXL	above 48" chest



Polo shirts: Royal blue, short sleeves, button-up collar, white DCA badge.  
Available in the same size range as sweatshirts £16.00



Knitted hat:

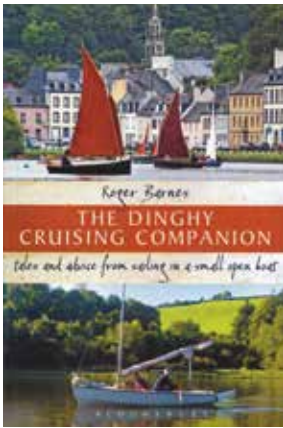
Designed to match the DCA burgee; hand knitted in navy with white triangles around the turned-up brim and a yellow crown.

Two sizes are available (same price): Small (skull cap) and Large £12.00

## Journal back numbers

An archive of the DCA journal Dinghy Cruising covering the last 60+ years is available on CD or USB £10

# DCA Members' Advertisements



**The Dinghy Cruising Companion:** Tales and Advice from Sailing a Small Open Boat (1st Edition), by Roger Barnes, President of the DCA

**The text covers:** Finding a good boat, Fitting out for daysailing, Boatcraft under engine and oar, Mooring and anchoring, Preparing for open water, Out at sea, Coastal navigation, Dinghy homemaking, Keeping comfortable and safe.

**Dimensions:** 234 X 156 mm. Paperback 256 pages

RRP: £16.99 (Bloomsbury) and online price (Amazon) £11.89

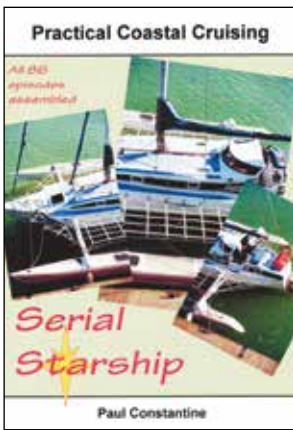
**Details:** Published 13.03.2014 by Bloomsbury.

Imprint: Adlard Coles

Beautiful colour illustrations and photographs throughout.

Buy online from Bloomsbury:

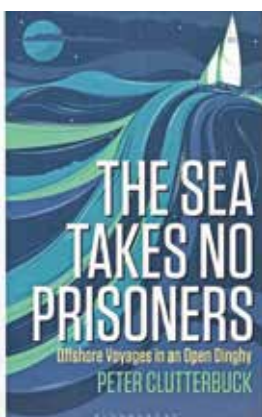
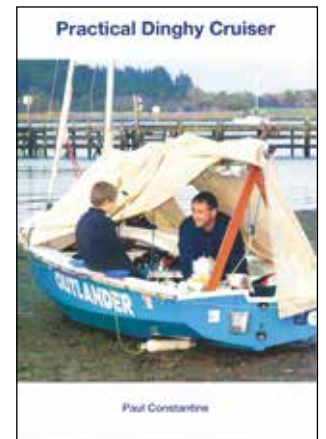
<http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/the-dinghy-cruising-companion-9781408179161/#sthash>.



**Practical Dinghy Cruiser (2nd edition)** begins at the beginning by asking Who Cruises? and What is Dinghy Cruising? The next question is Can I do it? Sprinkled through Practical Dinghy Cruiser are many references to the DCA's articles that further expand the relevant information and add the experiences of numerous different people, in different boats, in different locations.

**Practical Coastal Cruising: Serial Starship** tells how Paul singlehandedly builds a 35ft x 22ft cruiser in his garden and then goes on a four year journey to circumnavigate Britain including the Hebrides, Orkney, Fair Isle and Muckle Flugga in Shetland. The story describes the wonderful locations, the varied wildlife as well as the challenge of surviving Force 10 in the open Atlantic and navigating rock strewn passages in thick fog without modern electronic navigation aids.

Both books can be purchased direct from [www.moonshinepublications.co.uk](http://www.moonshinepublications.co.uk) and there is a discount for DCA members.



Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: Adlard Coles Nautical (11 Jan. 2018)

ISBN-10: 1472945719

ISBN-13: 978-1472945716

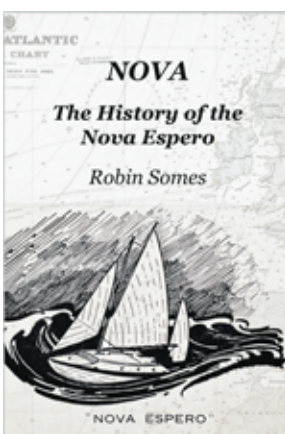
Product Dimensions: 15.8 x 1.7 x 23.7 cm

Price: £11.99; RRP £14.99 & \$22.00

Available as a Kindle Edition (£8.77) and as an audio book: Audible (£9.18)

Peter Clutterbuck joined the DCA aged 16 — and took the Naylor Noggin before the year was out. The Wayfarer Owners Association inspected his logs and awarded him the Viking Longship Trophy. As he approached 18, he sailed across the Channel and down to Marseille, via Bordeaux, Toulouse and Sète, the longest voyage made by a class dinghy to that date, for which he was once more awarded the Viking Longship Trophy.

These adventures and many more form Part One, and in Part Two he passes on his fund of knowledge and experience. Peter is one of this country's most outstanding dinghy skippers. His book is well written, exciting and informative—*Ed*



Robin Somes, whose article on his uncles, Stan and Colin Smith, appeared first in our journal, has now completed his book, *Nova — The History of the Nova Espero*. It is available from his website either as an **e-book, at £7.99**, or as a **printed book costing £9.99** plus postage: [shop.robinsomes.co.uk](http://shop.robinsomes.co.uk)

DCA members can get a 15% reduction by using this code on checkout: **DCA-DISC\_15**, and the same reduction using the code on other 'Smith-related' items.

'Part history, part sourcebook, part biography, this book tells the story of the boat, and the extraordinary characters involved with her, from the craft her design was based upon, to her final fate, and the brothers' audacious plans for peace colonies across the world.

'Featuring news stories and published works from the time, and many previously unpublished letters and photographs, the book provides a long-awaited explanation of precisely why the brothers chose to cross the Atlantic in an unfeasibly small boat, and a history of NOVA's other, equally remarkable, journeys.' — *Robin Somes*



# Plans...

## Roamer & Rebell

### ROAMER

DCA Members

Printed plans - 2 sheets plus spiral-bound building instructions

£45 plus post and packing

PDF copies of both plans and building instructions

£30

Non-Members\*

Printed plans - 2 sheets plus spiral-bound building instructions

£75 plus post and packing

PDF copies of both plans and building instructions

£60

### REBELL

DCA Members

Printed plans - 6 sheets plus spiral-bound building instructions

£65 plus post and packing

PDF copies of both plans and building instructions

£40

Non-Members\*

Printed plans - 6 sheets plus spiral-bound building instructions

£95 plus post and packing

PDF copies of both plans and building instructions

£70

\* The prices for non-members include four complimentary pdf copies of Dinghy Cruising, the DCA quarterly journal, which will be sent to you over the following year.

Post and Packing Costs

UK £8    Europe £12    Rest of World £15

**NOTE: More detail, background and photographs, plus articles relating to their design and use, will be found on the Website:**

[dinghycruising.org.uk/roamer-and-rebell](http://dinghycruising.org.uk/roamer-and-rebell)

## For Sale Venture Kayaks EASKY 13 Recreational Tourer – £450 (Email me for a full A4 pdf sheet of details)



Keith Muscott

Mobile: 0754 717 6565

Email: keithmuscott@aol.com

Delivery? I'll help you put it on your roofrack...

Anglesey LL65 4EJ

This is the kayak I took around Coniston Water, featured in the DC227 article *Chasing Arthur Ransome*.

The Easky has good primary and secondary stability. It can take water up to the cockpit edge without capsizing, but though it is good at 'edging' you are inviting a capsize if you make a habit of it. You reach a point where it just goes over. (Agile paddlers – not me – can remount by boarding from the rear.)

The hull is soundly built and very stiff for a plastic boat. Both hatch covers are still 100% watertight. As usual, the oval aft cover is harder to stretch and close than the circular forward one, which is easy. The big crew hatch makes boarding and leaving as trouble-free as any kayak that requires the paddler to use a skirt. Pyranha stretch hatch cover.

It is comfortable, with a broad beam (27 inches) and a padded seat. The Flip-Top backrest flicks from the up to down position with ease. Seat angle is controlled by a bungee-plus-jam-cleat linkage inside the cockpit. The deck pod (not shown) adds an extra 3 litres of storage and gives easy access to essential small items

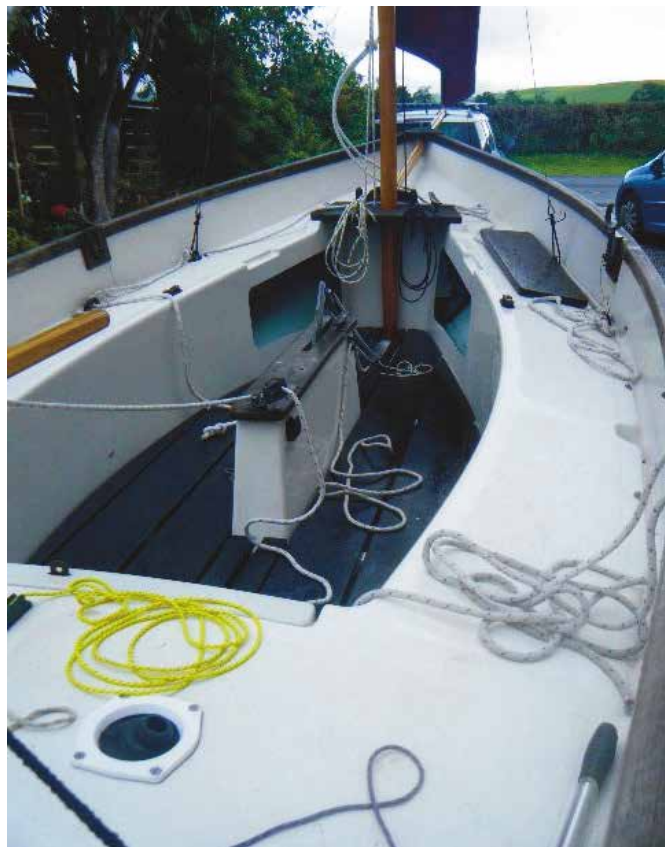
**This boat has its share of launching and retrieving scrapes and scratches on the bottom and on the sides in places, but there are no splits or holes, mended or existing. And the deck is in excellent condition.**

# For Sale: Drascombe Dabber Mark 2, Sail #797

£4750

15ft 6ins Cruising Dinghy, 1996  
White unpainted original gelcoat, anti-fouled.  
Lugsail Main, Jib and Mizzen  
Varnished mast and spars  
Galvanised centreplate  
Wooden one-part rudder with long varnished tiller  
Oars, anchor, fenders  
Two new covers, cockpit and overall  
Tohatsu 3.5hp outboard motor  
Galvanised trailer with new hubs, bearings and new tyres, new spare wheel

Ready to sail and ready to tow condition.  
View near Castle Douglas, SW Scotland  
Can deliver in UK for fuel and expenses  
Tel. 01556 660 007  
email. [dave@boatsutow.co.uk](mailto:dave@boatsutow.co.uk)



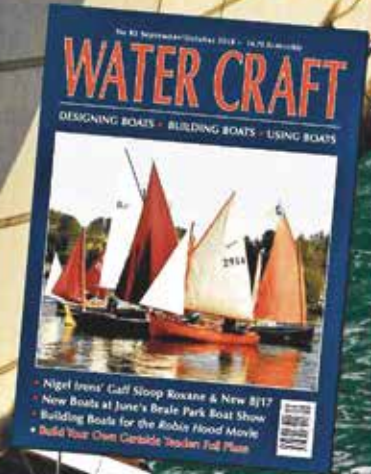
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Onward!

Sam Llewellyn  
Editor

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