

Bear Essentials



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What's the point of a club? It seems obvious. It's a focal point which allows people of similar interests to interact with others and exchange experiences, provide mutual support and enable activities that would be impossible for an individual, such as group and team events, lectures and practical 'how to' demonstrations. That's why Penarth Motor Boat and Sailing club was formed back in 1932 and it started life as many did – and as many today continue – in the upstairs room of a pub.

Recently the CoM has received a number of suggestions aimed at fostering this camaraderie including the creation of working parties to do essential work around the clubhouse and yard – a suggestion that I've heard expressed recently in several quarters. This is an interesting idea. There are several reasons why it's not practical – not least because it's usually the same people who do the work. And when a nearby club tried to change this by levying a surcharge on subs – redeemable by joining work parties – the scheme collapsed under the weight of its own bureaucracy. But the idea and its persistence is interesting because it suggests that somehow an indefinable 'something' has been lost from the ethos of the club. Let's go back to the early days. The founder members could only communicate with like-minded individuals by forming a club. There was no email or Whatsapp groups. Very few would even have a telephone.

Today the TARS - Tuesday and Thursday afternoon racing groups - communicate solely through Facebook and they hope soon to extend the programme to Saturday racing too. All my cruising is done with a group of friends who keep boats in the West Country, the Solent and Scotland. We follow - and watch - each others' sailing activities through a variety of electronic media and organise our cruises the same way. We are effectively a club – but without any formal structure or membership fees. Of course, clubs also allow members to watch practical demonstrations or hear inspiring talks from those who have ventured further or faster. Except, we've had to cancel our programme of winter talks because of a lack of interest. Who wouldn't want to hear the experiences of someone who'd sailed to Archangel and back? Well, those who read his blogs and watched his progress by live web-streamed video. And those who couldn't be bothered to. So, that'll be everyone then. Want to know how to change your fuel injectors? There'll be a YouTube video for that.

And it's not just social media that's changing things. More people today are cash rich but time poor. I talked to a neighbouring berth holder in Neyland a while back who was complaining about the delay in getting his boat hauled out and the bottom scrubbed. I suggested that if he picked his spot he could dry out and do it himself between tides. "I charge my clients £110 an hour for my time," he said. "Why would I waste time I could spend sailing or with my family when I can pay someone £30 an hour to do it for me?"

The CoM is constantly trying to improve communication with members both in range and in the media used. But it's hard to keep up with the constant evolution of social media and the speed of its technological change. Which means what sort of club we have in the future is down to you, the members.

So ask not what you can do for your club; rather, ask what your club can do for you... and then tell us.

Mike Slater

Editor

Great conditions and some good fish for the 41st Open Cod, reports Phil Evans



The day started early with the committee and volunteers arriving at the club at 5am to get this major event under way. John Gittins and Phil Evans manned the gate to make sure there were enough parking spaces for club members and Steve and Simon were in the yard to ensure all the boats were safely launched.

Registration was held in the downstairs bar headed up by Tess Watts and Keri Britten with assistance from Harvey Preston, Paul Akerman, Simon Watts, Don Sewell, Steve Tipples and Morris Thompson.

Breakfast was being served up in the quarterdeck from 6am so the anglers could eat while working out their strategy for the day and the staff did a great job in getting them fed. Bryn Thomas and Andrew Lewis were checking all the boats just in case they had a stow-away cod.

With boats from as far as Liverpool locking out of the barrage they coped well with the 120 boats with 517 anglers, they had all three locks working to make sure they got to the start line by 8am.

It was a beautiful sunny morning with a flat calm Bristol Channel... that was until the air horn sounded for the start of the competition when the spray from the boats clouded visibility as the anglers dispersed in all directions.

Fishing on the day was good. Boats started arriving back at the club from about 4.30 to make sure they were back for the last weigh-in at 6.15pm and eventually 34 anglers weighed in cod. Weigh-masters were Jason Griffiths and John Gittins with Idris Dibble as our independent scrutiniser and while there were no outstanding sizes the number was better than the previous year.



1st place was Tim Theyer on board White Water Charters 7.22kg

2nd place was Simon Batey also on White Water Charters 7.12kg

3rd place was Dean Davies on board Lady Jue 6.48kg

All 34 anglers received a prize with our commodore David Cairncross presenting the prizes and trophy. Our main sponsor for this event was GARMIN who gave us three fabulous prizes but we also had lots of other sponsors that gave generously.

There was a charity raffle run on the night by myself in aid of the Neonatal Unit at the Heath Hospital, the prizes were donated by myself, Paul Akerman, John Gittins and Garry Evans Tackle. Everyone gave what they could and we raised £491 that was with the help of an auction of a Charter Trip voucher won by Mike Voice from the RRC for £50. I am still receiving donations and will keep you updated with the running total.

The date for the 42nd Annual Cod Comp is set for December 9 2018.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped to make this event possible, including Laura Mahon who does so much work behind the scenes that others don't see.



SWOG 2018

New destinations and a couple of surprise omissions

The 2018 SWOG programme has been published with some interesting changes and venues which might encourage new Swoggers and those recently come to cruising to extend their boating range. Out are Padstow and Swansea, in are Porlock and Oxwich.

"Well, it's part of the bigger picture," says Swogmeister Martin Gifford. "We have fewer places to go for a start. Lydney is out, of course, and Padstow has always been difficult for some of the fleet."

So this is the thinking behind the schedule:

Porlock then Watchet: "The tides aren't great for Watchet on those days so this gives people the opportunity to anchor off and then come up with the tide, spend the night at anchor and come up on the Sunday or just push straight across, according to how they feel. But it also is an opportunity for those who've never anchored there – and might feel a little nervous about doing so – to do it in company with people who know Porlock."

Oxwich but not Swansea: "Swansea is a slog and you always seem to spend ages waiting around to get in and then ages getting out again. And Oxwich is a very useful anchorage if you're heading further west – say to Milford Haven. So, again, if people haven't anchored there before it's an opportunity to do so in company. The tides are good but, of course, it depends upon the weather".

No Ilfracombe? "The trouble with Ilfracombe is it's not good for the bigger boats. If you can go right in and take the ground, it's fine. I like Ilfracombe but I'd have problems anchoring off. And it's not tremendously welcoming."

Five days for Lundy: "This is a solstice cruise. I've always wanted to do a solstice cruise and this is an opportunity. It's a long way but boats can lock out at night and sail through very little darkness to make a lot of progress. And, again, it's an opportunity for anyone who wishes to do a bit of extra night sailing. Bigger boats can leave when they like and go straight down."

There will be the usual SWOG+, a nine-day cruise of the Bristol Channel from July 21 – 29 and another SWOG++, a 16-day cruise with the Scillies as the destination from July 14-29.

"We got to Ireland last year and we did it bit-by-bit, taking things as they came," says Martin. "This time the idea is to turn right at Cardiff and then turn left at the end of the Bristol Channel. If conditions combine to make the Scillies unattractive we can perhaps go round the corner to, say, Newlyn. It's an opportunity to get off the south coast of Wales."

As in previous years both long cruises end together, giving the opportunity for boats from both groups to meet up for the last night or two – weather permitting. Indeed all the cruises will be subject to conditions and consensus.

"You can sit by your warm fire at this time of year and plan but we all know what the Bristol Channel is like."



Evening at anchor off Tenby



Oxwich has a lot going for it



Anchoring off Tenby



Cumberland Basin, Bristol

SWOG 2018 Itinerary

May 5-7 **Watchet via Porlock**

May 26-28 **Bristol via Portishead**

June 16-17 **Oxwich**

June 12-25 **Lundy**

July 28-29 **Watchet**

August 25-27 **Tenby**

(Entry £15 and free event wear for all participants)



Boating with baby – Part Two

Louisa and Richard find things change when the compliant crew gets mobile

Summer 2017 was a successful sailing season for us given it was the first season sailing with a baby. Initially, I was quite hesitant to take Ollie out to sea on the boat as there were so many “unknown” situations that could have occurred. However, I knew that I couldn’t live like that, and it was worth trying at least once. I think I would have happily used the boat as a floating caravan last year and not gone anywhere.

Amongst numerous day sails we made four journeys last year with Ollie on board. Two to Portishead and two to Bristol. We were very selective in what conditions we sailed in. I insisted on Flat Calms as I didn’t want the rolling waves and bad weather to upset Ollie. Nor did I want to be seasick and therefore unable to care for him. In fact, I felt a great sense of responsibility, far more than I have ever felt before on the boat. I had an important role as crew but also a role as mum to ensure Ollie was ok. It’s fair to say Richard sailed for the most part single-handed. I made myself available when locking in and out and tying up etc.

Our first two trips were very easy; Ollie slept all the way there. It must have been the gentle swaying of the boat and the fact he was only a few months old. He was tucked up in his carrycot in

the aft cabin with me neurotically checking on him every five minutes. What I do remember quite vividly was all the baby “kit” we had to take. Instead of one trip down the pontoon with the trolley, we now made three. The boat is not particularly small, however, it felt small by the time all his and our stuff was loaded on. There was no bedtime routine on board. I treated the weekends as mini holidays, and we all slept, ate and wandered when we wanted. There was a distinct lack of boozing and more focus on finding family-friendly activities like the lido in Portishead, the shops and cafes in Bristol and snacks on board.

As our first two trips were so successful and the forecast was so good we decided to take our four-year-old niece Mila with us on our next trip. Again I was quite apprehensive about doing this but had promised her for about two years that I would take her out on the boat. We couldn’t have picked better weather. The sun was shining and everyone had a great time. We all went swimming, we did some crabbing (unsuccessful), we walked and walked and walked some more. Ollie was stationary in his bouncing chair and Mila was able to obey a command to sit still. So jumping on/off and mooring up was quite stress-free. Ollie by now was sitting up, but couldn’t move or crawl, therefore he could be easily entertained by surrounding him with rattles, toys and brightly coloured objects. If we needed to tidy up for instance, we would place him in the aft cabin with his toys and

...But you should have tried it 60 years ago!

Long-time CBYC members and former commodores Peter and Jean Annett took their two-year-old son on a holiday cruise in the Fifties in an open keelboat. Mike Slater talked to them about the trip.

It was July 1955, there was still rationing and Britain was struggling to emerge from post-war austerity when Peter and Jean decided to have a camping holiday on their International Star *Barracuda*. They cycled the five or six miles from their home in Fareham to Gosport, with two-year-old Colin in a seat behind, and set sail with a primus stove, water and food and just a boom tent cover for protection.

Jean said, "When we were sailing Colin sat in his push-chair in the well just aft of the mast and if it got a bit rough we pushed him under the decking."

"We left at noon in a light breeze, ample for a Star," recalled Peter, "but it took us three hours to exit Portsmouth Harbour because every time we got to the entrance we had to avoid an incoming Isle of Wight ferry and in the light winds got swept back in by the tide. Eventually we cleared the harbour and set off for Cowes, picking up a vacant mooring off the Island Sailing Club. The next morning we left for Newtown Creek."

They relaxed there for three days and put the Star against the quay wall to scrub clean the boat's bottom before participating in Cowes Week. Colin sat in his push-chair above them on the quayside and nappies fluttered from the rigging.

"On the Sunday we set sail in a light sea breeze for Cowes," said Peter. "We were off Gurnard when Jean, who was helming, said she had no steering and, sure enough, there was no response from the tiller."

"The Royal Yacht Britannia was off Cowes but there was no offer of a tow from the Royal Barge and eventually a kind yachtsman towed us into East Cowes Sailing Club."

East Cowes had a reciprocal arrangement with their own Millbrook Sailing Club back in Gosport with members frequently making sailing visits and so they were welcomed and the boat was hauled out on the club trolley where it was discovered the entire rudder had disappeared. "The response was 'Didn't you try to retrieve the rudder blade?'" said Peter.

"The following day, Monday, I went to Clare Lallows yard and bought two 12" phosphor-bronze rods for the new rudder blade. I didn't have the cash to pay for them and asked if they could send the bill to my home address. They said that wasn't a problem but I never got a bill so I still haven't paid for them. The rods were machined by an East Cowes member – many of the club members were employed by Saunders Roe (the flying boat manufacturer) – and then taken to a local boatbuilder for the assembly to be delivered in two weeks time."



For most people that would have been the end of the trip – particularly as Jean was also pregnant with their second – but they'd set out for Cowes Week and decided that if they couldn't compete, they'd enjoy the spectacle.

"We didn't have money for a guesthouse so the sailing club let us sleep in their sail loft," said Jean. "We stayed for three days and watched the end-of-regatta fireworks. We had a whale of a time and everyone made a fuss of Colin."

They returned to Portsmouth on the Isle of Wight ferry and came back to Cowes a fortnight later to collect and fit the new rudder. All went well until the time came to re-launch *Barracuda*. They'd become used to their own club's launching winch which was creakingly-slow and ponderous.

"The East Cowes winch was a lovely piece of machinery, well greased and maintained," said Peter. "The boat started down the slipway faster than we expected and before Jean could apply the

Continued on Page 18...



Sheenan Restoration

From rock to a hard place

As a tour manager Michael Jobson was used to kicking down hotel room doors to drag rock stars onto tour buses... and he thought that was tough. Then he began restoration work on an 80-year-old yawl. Mike Slater has been talking to him.

Funny how sailing gets you. Seven years ago Michael Jobson hadn't been on a sailing boat. Now he races his 50ft Grand Soleil in Ibiza and is about to bring his 'other boat' the classic 42-foot wooden yawl, Sheenan, to CBYC. A short time... but a long story. He was born into a musical family in Fife and both he and his brother Richard graduated to top rock bands. Richard is singer with Scottish post punk group The Skids while Michael, a guitarist, was invited to play with Echo and the Bunnymen – something he describes as a great privilege - and worked with artists like Amy Winehouse before moving into music management. Around 2010 Michael was on a walking tour in the Western Isles with a bunch of Brazilian friends when they stopped off at the Duisdale House Hotel, overlooking the Sound of Sleat on Skye (featured in Bear Essentials, summer 2016).

There they took advantage of a day sail in the owners' Sun Odyssey 50. Superb sailing, amazing scenery, fine food, good company and Michael was hooked.

He worked his way through Yachtmaster and chartered in Asia and America before buying his own boat in the Med but still had no thoughts of becoming custodian of a classic. Sheenan was owned by his wife's uncle, Tony McGrail. She was designed by McPherson Campbell, built by Dickies of Bangor in 1937 and had at one point been owned by Brian Faulkner, the last prime minister of Northern Ireland. Tony had planned to restore the boat but





was overtaken by illness so Michael agreed to buy it from him 'to keep it in the family'. She was made seaworthy and moved from Parkstone Yacht Club in Poole to nearby Cobb's Quay where she underwent a re-fit in preparation for sailing further afield.

"When we put her back into the water for trials the engine bilge pump seemed to be doing a lot of work. She's got a canoe stern so it was difficult to check but the smallest guy in the yard managed to squeeze in and found water was coming in. We had to cut out the floor to get at the leak and found the leak was from the rudder stock. Then we discovered the ply under the teak decking was rotten so we took that out, took the engine out and cleaned the bilge. That showed us that the keel bolts – replaced in a previous restoration – were of mild steel and were corroding. We ended up replacing 60% of them.

"All in all, I've only had one sail in her in nine months." Now, after restoration, new winches, a new engine, new standing and running rigging and 27 coats of Awlgrip varnish on her brightwork she's back to her original condition. More than original, in fact, because there's now a load of Raymarine electronics carefully hidden behind the gleaming joinery of her saloon. The boat cost Michael £65,000 and he reckons he's spent as much again in the restoration. After sea trials, which will be in the next week or two, she'll be heading for Cardiff and then off for a three-month tour of Britain – via Cape Wrath, no Great Glen short-cuts – which Michael and his crew plan to film. It'll be part documentary, part pilot, because they plan to use video and animation to produce a guide to the many small and often difficult harbours and anchorages around the coast, and part nostalgia trip.

"We'll have to visit Northern Ireland because of the Brian Faulkner connection, the Firth of Forth, which is the area in which I was born; the Royal Northern and Clyde Yacht Club at Rhu because I'm a member there and, of course, Bangor, where it all started."



Gemini's south coast summer

Stuart and Gaynor Preece took their boat to Devon last season and enjoyed a laid-back summer on one of Britain's most beautiful coastlines.

Our first-ever season 'away from home' was way back in 2003 when we bought our Westerly Konsort, Shallow Bauble, which was already moored in Noss Marina in Dartmouth. The name came with the boat and apparently comes from Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida. She came with seven months mooring fees and we decided to keep her down there for a further year. Since then, due to an increase in birthdays, and health, we have moved to the 'dark side' and on to motorboating but have always intended to return to Dartmouth. Work commitments and two knee and a shoulder operations got in the way but at the end of March last year, Gemini, our Jeanneau Prestige 32, headed for Dartmouth.

It was an amazingly easy trip! She was lifted on to John Hamer's truck in the afternoon. We arrived at Darthaven at 9.30am the next morning and there she was in the river waiting for us to take her to her mooring and ready for the forthcoming season.

The river Dart is such a beautiful part of the country and our mooring was at Noss Marina, a secluded spot about a five-minute dinghy ride up the river from Dartmouth on the eastern bank. The marina has a history of shipbuilding dating back to the 1880s. It was purchased by Philip & Son Ltd in 1917 recruiting hundreds of local men and turning out thousands of tonnes of historic naval vessels, lightships for Trinity House and even Chay Blyth's British Steel round-the-world yacht. During the war the shipyard built over 200 vessels as part of the war effort and in 1942 the shipyard was hit by Luftwaffe bombs which killed 20 men. The yard was eventually closed in 1999 but there is still a memorial to those who lost their lives at the yard.

Close by there are woodland walkways along the Dart Trail where you can find an abundance of wildlife. Noss is quite a tranquil marina but on occasions can wake you up with a few surprises such as the steam train passing with its loud 'hoot!' There is also the naval cadets practising their manoeuvres while firing machine guns (hopefully blanks!), and we've even had a naval helicopter flying by only feet above the highest mast!

As we planned to be down in Dartmouth for a full season we decided to join Dartmouth Yacht Club - a bargain at £95 per year



The Ferry Boat Inn

Tall ship at Dartmouth regatta



which gave us 20% off all drinks and food. The Committee and members were very welcoming and Gaynor even joined the tap dancing class for a bit of fun, where she was one of the youngest there - but not the fittest! There are plenty of pubs and restaurants to visit but with our 20% discount we tended to favour the yacht club. There is a wealth of water sports available for hire, and also free through the yacht club, which include paddleboarding, dinghy sailing, and kayaking. Dartmouth seems to have a much more relaxed pace and way of life but there is always something going on such as the Food and Crab Festivals and of course the Regatta which attracts thousands of people to the town.

Dartmouth is ideally situated for trips around the coast to Torquay, Brixham, Salcombe, Plymouth and Fowey. However on a sunny weekend it can get quite busy. Nearer, there are some pretty anchorages like Blackpool Sands. If you're feeling brave Redlap Cove is a perfect away from it all, protected anchorage for an afternoon in the sun. Due to the contour of the seabed we could anchor off only yards from the beach. In fact one local even swam out to us to say hello. Be aware of the river speed limit which well extends out to the Castle ledge buoy. We didn't realise it extended so far and were 'pulled over' by Harbour Patrol.

In times of choppy seas you can pop up the Dart to Dittisham, for a pint at the locally named FBI (Ferry Boat Inn) where they have monthly Sunday afternoon bands to listen to while you enjoy your roast lunch. There is also a nice trip further up the river to Totnes but you must be mindful of the tides. The Maltsters Arms pub (previously owned by Keith Floyd) up the river at Tuckenhay is another enjoyable afternoon trip - but also tidal.

There was plenty of wildlife around the marina and we used to have a regular visit from the seals. One in particular used to arrive to play with Roy, a springer spaniel owned by one of the staff.

Noss Marina has now been taken over by Premier Marinas who have plans for developing the site with new pontoons and marina facilities, a hotel, bar, cafe and housing.

Gemini came home at the beginning of November. With only a two-and-a-half hour drive down we were able to pop back and fore dependent on the weather and in total we spent 90 nights on board. We had a very enjoyable season and hope to return once the improvements to the marina have been made - health permitting!

Stuart & Gaynor Preece

The steam train that provided our early morning alarm call



The Maltsters Arms, Tuckenhay creek



A friendly seal



Our view astern each morning



Tony's New Boat





The future – coming to a berth near you!

Fast, dry and powerful, equally at home in the Fastnet or as a viewing platform for a dozen friends on international race days. That's Tony Rayer's old boat... you should see the new one!

Well, perhaps we're getting a little ahead of ourselves, Turkana, Tony's Dufour 36 Performance will still be up there with the pack for the coming season. But in December he'll take delivery of a new Pogo 12.50 from the French company's Benodet headquarters and it's going to raise some eyebrows.

It's a 40-foot boat that weighs just five-and-a-half tons and with a good wind on the beam or aft will plane... for hour after hour. A 35 – 40 knot following wind – when other boats are reducing canvas – is no problem because the Pogo 12.50 will be doing 20 knots plus. A new owner recently crossed the Atlantic averaging 10 knots and said he was taking it easy because he took the spinnaker in at night.

And that, simply, is the attraction.

"Turkana is a lovely boat, she's super to sail and very dry – even in heavy weather you rarely get water coming down the side decks. And she's quick; in the Fastnet we touched 16 knots surfing off a wave.

"But all the new Dufours are chine boats and that's the way forward now. It's strange to think that 40 years ago one-tonners like Bankrupt were chine boats and it's taken that long for things to come full circle," said Tony.

There are a few other features to the Pogo 12.50 that make it stand out – particularly among 40-footers. There's no kicker – just pad-eyes at each side of the cockpit to rig boom tension if needed and there's no genoa track – the sail is cut so the clew rises to provide the right sheeting angle as it's rolled in – and there's a barber-hauler arrangement using low-friction rings to adjust the slot. There are no backstays to the deck-stepped mast which is further aft than usual and has very swept-back spreaders and there is a removable babystay which is designed to fly a 27 sq metre trinquette as an optional heavy-weather sail. She has a

swing keel with a huge lead bulb on the end which goes down almost 10 ft but the draught is just over 4ft with it up. The beam is almost 16ft which makes it very stable and provides a huge cockpit where Tony has opted for tiller steering rather than twin wheels.

"You don't need ten people on the rail to keep this boat up and wheel steering puts whoever is helming in an exposed position. With tiller steering they can be in the well with the protection of a sprayhood."

Performance apart, the quality of the build was another deciding factor and Tony, who took Simon Thomas with him to the Chantier Nautical Structures factory for a fact-finding visit and trial sail, was very impressed.

"The boat is allowed to air cure slowly and naturally – no heating – and then it stays in the mould while they fit the interior joinery, which is a strong, lightweight beech laminate they produce themselves, and then fit on the deck and coachroof moulding. It makes for a very stiff boat that hasn't distorted one fraction during the fit out and the weight of the complete boat varies very little. In a J109 for example, it's not unusual for apparently identical boats to be a ton different in weight. The Pogo 12.50's differ from their design weight by only about 80 kilos."

The Pogo 12.50 can also be sailed short-handed as everything is brought back to four winches in the cockpit, including lines to the foredeck jammers controlling the gennaker.

Come December, Tony and crew will head for Benodet for a day's familiarisation course – Naval Structures don't let anyone loose with one of their boats until they're happy they can handle them – and then sail for home.

"I've got a dozen volunteers for the trip so far," says Tony, "but four of us should manage it."

If that sounds a little short-handed for a trip from Benodet to Cardiff in December you're forgetting the boat's phenomenal performance. Given a decent beam or following wind they'll be at Land's End in just 12 hours.

Tony's thinking of calling the boat *Ca Va*, the French expression that approximates to 'how's it going...?'

But the literal translation is 'It Goes'. And it will!

All A-Board!

New Paddleboard Training



And now for something completely different... the training centre is to offer paddleboard training lessons for beginners.

The first lessons – six evening sessions for a total of £120 – will begin in May.

Paddleboarding is not only hugely popular among young people, it is one of the few water-based activities that has consistently shown year-on-year growth over the past decade in the RYA's annual watersports survey.

It's not hard to see why. Gliding across a calm sea – closer to the water than you can get without actually being in it – is very relaxing. But it has its adrenalin addicts too. Paddle boarders take on big surf, river rapids and even waterfalls. Check it out on <https://standuppaddlemag.co.uk>

Nick Sawyer, who is organising the sessions, said, "The first series of lessons will be for members but if it is successful we will consider buying the equipment and running our own, open courses."



Pics courtesy of SUPM - Stand Up Paddle Magazine UK



Maritime Mysteries

Where did they go? Alan Thorne looks at some local maritime mysteries.

A century ago the maritime world was buzzing with speculation about the strange case of the Cardiff sailing barge *Zebrina* which had been found intact but crewless off Cherbourg. Was this another *Mary Celeste*?

To recap, the *Mary Celeste* was spotted by the brigantine *Dei Gratia* off the Azores. She was under sail and when boarded it was found her captain and crew were missing, along with the ship's only lifeboat. She had slight damage to rigging and upperworks and some water ingress but was substantially sound. Despite many theories, the circumstances that forced all crew to leave remain a mystery to this day. The *Dei Gratia's* skipper, David Morehouse, split her crew of eight and after a gruelling passage brought both ships into Gibraltar, 1,100 miles away.

The *Zebrina* was launched at Whitstable in 1873, 109ft long with a beam of 23ft and a draft of only 9ft 9". She was rigged as a three-masted barquentine and went out to the River Plate where she traded for eight years before returning to the UK. In 1900 she was bought by Cardiff owners and re-rigged as a double topsail schooner. She didn't need ballast and her flatish bottom made her ideal for the drying harbours of the Bristol Channel. During WWI she ran between Cardiff and France and it was on October 1917 she was spotted aground south of Cherbourg but with no sign of master or crew. Unlike the *Mary Celeste* she was in excellent order with all her gear and effects intact and the weather was fair. She was taken into Cherbourg where she discharged.

With the *Zebrina*, however, there is a plausible theory to explain the mystery. At that time German U-boats were attacking shipping off the Atlantic coasts and a frequent *modus operandi* to save torpedoes was to surface, take off the crew, and then sink the vessel with gunfire. It is generally supposed this happened but that the U-boat was disturbed before sinking the *Zebrina*, submerged and was later sunk with all hands in a separate action ... along with the luckless captives.

But if you want maritime mysteries the Bristol Channel is full of them. The County of Aberdeen, an iron-built, four-masted, fully-rigged ship, left Cardiff on December 21, 1884, with coal for Bombay and was never seen again. The *Inversnaid*, also iron-built and a genuine 'tall ship' – she crossed a main sky-sail – left Penarth in October 1886 with coal for Singapore. She too disappeared but two weeks later part of one of her lifeboats and her figurehead were washed up on Lundy.

These were substantial ships – 280ft and 250ft in length respectively with a beam of around 40ft. To put it into perspective, they were about the size of the dredgers seen going in and out of Cardiff today. There's no suggestion they were dangerously overloaded as ships in the earlier part of the nineteenth century often were. Samuel Plimsoll's Merchant Shipping Act which enforced a visual indication of loading limits had been in force for a decade.

And the list goes on. The iron steam ship *Zadne* loaded coal at Briton Ferry and was later seen anchored in Lundy roads on November 13, 1894, but then disappeared without trace taking 13 men with her. The iron-built steamship *Antrim*, built for the Antrim Iron Ore Company of Belfast, loaded coal at Newport. She was seen at the Scarweather lightship on April 21, 1902 but never seen again. And these are just some of many other – smaller – ships that also have disappeared without trace in the Bristol Channel.

It is, of course, one of the most treacherous seaways in the world; a narrowing, shoaling waterway where high tides can combine with prevailing westerlies and Atlantic swells to create seas powerful enough to destroy harbours like those at Hartland or on the Steep Holm and the pier at Woody Bay. But it was, at that time, also one of the busiest seaways in the world and it seems strange that substantial ships should founder without anyone seeing or hearing anything.

One indication of how quickly such things can happen is in the case of the *Prince Victor*, a wooden fully-rigged ship, which left Avonmouth in April 1887, part loaded with oil and paraffin and towed by two tugs to complete her loading at Sharpness. It was discovered too late that there was insufficient water to clear a sandbank – the 'World's End Sands' (51.33N, 02.43W). She turned broadside onto the tide and fell over onto her beams end so fast that one of the tugs, the *Victoria*, was crushed into the sand and disappeared. The *Prince Victor's* crew scrambled onto her port side, which was now awash. They were joined by men from the *Victoria* and all were taken off by another tug but the wife and son of the *Prince Victor's* captain both drowned. Their graves are in the churchyard at Woolaston, between Lydney and Chepstow. The *Prince Victor* was later righted, towed into Sharpness and broken up.

In the days of sail, in darkness or poor visibility and relying only on dead reckoning among shifting sands it's easy to see how mistakes could be made and the *Prince Victor* example shows how, if a ship touched on a fast-ebbing tide, disaster could strike swiftly. A final note on the *Zebrina*. She was brought back to Cardiff where an engine was installed and her topsail yards removed. She continued trading for many years until being holed in the Solent and falling apart. But there's another Bristol Channel link between her and the *Mary Celeste* other than their mysterious abandonment. The *Dei Gratia* – which found the *Mary Celeste* – was bought by the Flemming Brothers of Youghal in County Cork and used in the Bristol Channel trade. In 1907, captained by Joe Aherne, who went on to command the *Kathleen and May*, she left Cardiff with coal for Youghal. She put in to Dale roads on December 27 because of gales but her cable parted and she was holed on Black Rock. Patched up she made Cork but never sailed again and ended up as a coal hulk and then a breakwater. Her brass bell can be seen at the Royal Cork Yacht Club.

Entering The Fastnet

What does it take to do the Fastnet? (apart from £700 entry fee)

Tony Rayer reflects on the cost and the logistics of entering Britain's best-known offshore race



Since people continue to reflect on the '79 Fastnet and the loss of life it must be all about survival. Indeed it is a long haul, not to be taken lightly, and Turkana's preparation for the 2017 Fastnet Race serves as good guidance for anyone else 'messing around in boats' who thinks they might give it a go.

In 2017 we really don't have any excuse for not being prepared. Modern yachts are CE rated with both safety and personal equipment meeting exacting standards.

The yacht

You need to ask a question about how well maintained your yacht is. Without making any changes would you be happy sailing in 40 knots of wind 70 miles from land? If the answer is no, reflect on what you think you need, then look at the list of mandatory items that RORC require of you. Turkana is a modern yacht with three bilge pumps but we also had to install another

manual pump for the race. You also need life raft, slings, Dan-buoy, throwing lines, etc... plus more flares than most chandleries have in stock. A method of severing the rigging can be a 'real issue' and I opted for an 18v battery grinder as well as long armed croppers, the list goes on, and on.

Sails

You also need a usable hi-vis storm jib and staysail.

Insurance

Most insurers have an 'add-on' for a race of this type so expect to pay an excess (about £200). I guess you are starting to get the drift – a significant bill is coming.

The crew

I am very fortunate that there are a number of members at CBYC who are extremely competent and have that streak of insanity required to spend four to five days cooped up on a piece of plastic with another half a dozen people. However it does require a

Tony and crew (L to R) Tony Rayer, Richard Jennings, Maris Lyons, Mat Biscoe, Mark Watts, Andrew Cooper, photo by Simon Thomas



huge commitment that I am eternally grateful that the crew were keen to keep on giving.

Personal safety

A two-day sea survival course including life raft training is mandatory – a day in the classroom followed by a day at the International Pool. You get strange looks from lifeguards when you are poolside in sailing waterproofs, lifejackets and then someone explodes an eight-man life raft. This was a very useful course and I think ALL boat owners should think hard if they haven't done a similar one.

Pre-requisites

With the safety course out of the way the next step is meeting the '300 miles of offshore racing on the yacht entered for the Fastnet by 50% of the crew in the 12 months before the race' requirement. With Turkana, Blue Jay and May Contain Nuts all doing the Fastnet Race, Kevin Rolfe and the Club set up two races which were completed to meet the mileage. That apart, there is the 350-mile delivery to Southampton area plus keeping the boat on a mooring for a couple of weeks before the event which adds another £500+ to the bill.

Logistics

The weeks go very quickly and it isn't long before you hire those two large cars to deliver everyone and their gear to the boat. Arriving on Friday before a Sunday start is a good idea as that extra day allows you time to finalise everything and get those last few pints out of the system.

Racing with seven people for what could be five days means a lot of provisioning. In short there is at least a £250 food bill and with some of your crew wanting a cup of tea every half hour when on watch, that's 16 cups a day each (or more if you are Tommo). We went WELL prepared and could have probably done an Atlantic

crossing on the stores we had with us. But being warm and well fed helps with morale so I was happy to take too much. Not many yachts would have had fresh cooked bread every morning with our bacon and egg, fresh pasta and sauces for lunch and tiramisu or chocolate mousse after dinner, rinsed down with fresh ground coffee.

But that's what I thought the team needed, so that's what they got.

All this before the race starts, Sunday 11:40, the gun sounds, we're off...



Continued from Page 6

have a whip around. Our final trip away of the summer was to Bristol – a SWOG. We decided to leave a day early, taking full advantage of my maternity leave and the good weather. Again a lovely pleasant sail – Ollie was a good boy. We were joined in Bristol by my older daughter and her boyfriend. Unfortunately the barrage lock gate was not operational so all the other boats joining us for SWOG didn't arrive. For those that did make it (2-3 boats), there was a party on board our boat with plentiful cheese and wine. Ollie was passed from person to person and enjoyed all the fuss. Then he went to sleep whilst we partied a bit more. All in all, a lovely weekend.

During September, there was fundamental growth in his development, he learnt to crawl and within weeks was walking. It became very difficult to be on board at all, let alone sail anywhere. Ollie couldn't be contained, he wanted to crawl and walk constantly. No toys or shiny objects kept him still anymore. Because of this the boat became a bit of a hazard. There is very little room to walk and crawl and therefore the relaxed atmosphere that we had got used to was gone.

The last night we spent on board was at the club and was the coldest night of the year but we had heating, electric and the TV. We would be very comfortable!

Before arriving we went for an evening meal in the Cedar Tree Farm. There was a play area so Ollie ran around in circles with the other children. We then headed to the club for a bit more running and fun. By now it was 7.30pm, Ollie was shattered and ready for bed and I was confident he would drink his milk and go off to sleep relatively easily... Hmmmm!! When we got to the boat, Ollie got a second wind, and coupled with excitement, he wouldn't keep still. On the sofa, off the sofa, up the steps, down the steps, in the bedroom, lights on, lights off, empty the cupboards, run, scream and laugh. He drank his milk and appeared to settle down, but then he realised again where he was! By now

it was 10pm and he was overtired, hot and inconsolable. He cried for the next two hours.

Eventually he stopped crying because I found Peppa Pig on my phone on YouTube. My arm was holding it in the air, and me and Richard were using all our might to stay awake. Ollie was still wide-eyed, focussing on the little pink pig. He eventually fell asleep. He was very unsettled through the night and as soon as the sun was up, so was he. As soon as he arose in the morning, he ate some toast and we had to get off. There is no room for a high chair on board so just giving him breakfast was a challenge and I felt as if I hadn't even been to sleep.

Breakfast done, Ollie was off exploring again. He grew tired of this very quickly so we were off, walking the pontoons in the pram on a very frosty and cold morning.

We all couldn't wait to get home for a nap. In previous winter months we have used the boat as a floating caravan staying on board every weekend; however, this is not possible now. Ollie has just turned one and can now run and climb stairs. Richard has been frequenting the boat and I take Ollie to the soft play zone.

I am hopeful that by the summer we may be able to take Ollie away on the boat again. However, I am not sure how we will contain him when at sea. Possibly fit his car seat in the saloon or cockpit. Or possibly go for a late night sail, so he sleeps all the way. He is not yet able to obey a command "sit still" and to keep him on my lap for three hours will be almost impossible. If anyone has any suggestions about how to sail with a toddler, please get in touch. Sailing with a baby was pretty straightforward, sailing with a toddler will be a bit more tricky. Having said that we would like to get to Watchet this year – it is a must for us.

Louisa Laurent

Continued from Page 7

brake it hit a dinghy at the bottom of the slip and... knocked off half the rudder."

Nothing daunted, they sailed her back home as she was, without problems.

"She was always a lovely sailer and went like stink in the slightest breeze," said Peter. "And she was a dry boat, even when she was knocked over the side decks were so wide no water came aboard."

"I always felt safe sailing in the Star," said Jean, "she felt as if she was wrapped around you."

The whole adventure is even more surprising when you realise that at that time Jean was a comparative newcomer to sailing. Peter came from a boating family and had learned to sail as a young child with his uncle and aunt in Holyhead but Jean had never sailed when they met.

"It soon became clear to me that I'd better learn, quick," she said. Peter, who was a post office engineer, was eventually promoted to supervisor and, from a list of cities in which there were vacancies, was asked to choose four. They chose four which were by the sea and he was given Cardiff.

"He went off to begin his new job and came back after a fortnight saying 'I've found us a sailing club! He hadn't found us anywhere to live, but he'd found us a sailing club,'" said Jean.

That club was PMB&SC and the couple began sailing there. "I remember sailing through an entire winter in only shorts, a t-shirt and a jumper", recalls Jean, "but it eventually got a bit much and I said, 'I'm not doing this any more until we get wetsuits and self-bailers'. We got the wetsuits, and got the self-bailers by clearing furniture from the dining room, hauling the boat inside, and fitting them ourselves."

Peter says, "I remember one race up the river where we were leading on the leg back. We decided to cut inside one of the coal hoists that used to line the river from where the moorings are now to Cardiff Marina. The wind suddenly dropped, the mast came upright and we were stuck underneath the hoist as the whole of the fleet sailed past us. I got the Farmer's Trophy for that!" Sailing, however, has provided them and their family with more than just fond memories.

"When we came to Cardiff we knew no one," said Jean, "but being members of the sailing club brought us friends for a lifetime."

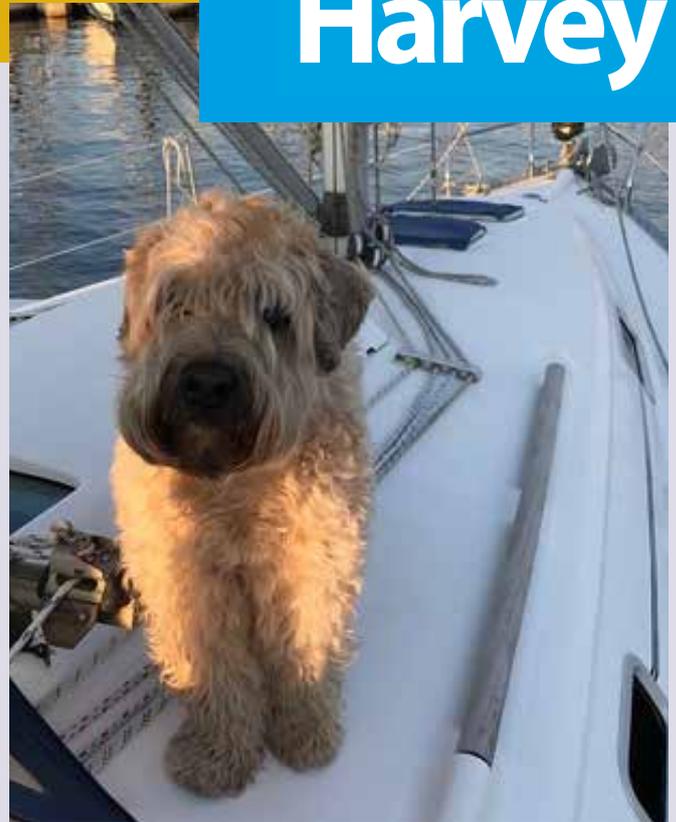
Harvey was going to put his name forward as 'Swogmeister' this year. He been to Watchet, Portishead, Bristol... and as for Milford Haven, he's sailed it from Dale to Lawrenny on board Sandra and James Hennefer's Oceanis 331, Spanker.

But then someone pointed out that he could lead a party to Lundy but he wouldn't be allowed to land and it all fell apart. And landing is a bit more important for a soft-coated wheaten terrier than for most sailors.

As soon as the dinghy's launched he jumps in, ready to go. He's also recently discovered he can go ashore himself if the boat is moored to a pontoon - mind you, the pontoon in the middle of Dale bay was a bit of a disappointment.

He's been further afield, too, sailing the south coast on a summer charter. He's a good sailor who enjoys being aboard and takes a lively interest in everything going on.

"But he doesn't like it if it's really rough," says Sandra. "Then he goes below, finds a bunk and goes to sleep."



Quiz by 'Sparky'



- In the North Atlantic, they're called hurricanes; in the North Indian Ocean, cyclones. But the Australians occasionally use a different name for what, in North America are called tropical cyclones. What is it?
- If the famous owner of Wild Goose could have placed a VHF radio call to the well-known owner of Tinef, who would have been calling who?
- What is the origin of the first 'red sky in the morning, sailor take warning' weather forecast with its verse, "When it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather for the sky is red. And in the morning it will be foul weather to day for the sky is red and lowring."
- Rudders are classified using three different terms. What terms apply to rudders A, B, and C in the following illustration?
- What are the light characteristics of a nav aid when it is shown on the chart as "ISO"; for ISOPHASE.
- One ocean covers more of the Earth's surface than all the Earth's entire LAND area. What is that ocean, and what percentage (within .5%) of the Earth's surface does it cover?
- In the Mediterranean Middle Ages, points of the compass were identified by names of winds. What was the wind name for North?
- What is the name of the most reliable and effective petrol fume detection system you can have aboard your vessel, and how is it activated?

Answers

- Williyah, Willie-Willie, Willy-Willy, Willie-Willi or anything similar.
- John Wayne would have been calling Albert Einstein.
- The Bible (Matthew Chapter 16, verses 2-3)
- A-Balanced... B-Semi-balanced... C-Unbalanced
- All durations of light and darkness are of equal length.
- The Pacific Ocean, its surface covers 32.4% of the Earth... 3.2% more than all land areas combined
- Tramontana
- Your nose, and it is of course activated by "sniffing".



Bear Essentials



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