

## SLIPPER SAILINGS Winter 2010

### Commodore's Corner

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Every year in October we hold the Commodores' Supper to thank our Committee for their hard work

throughout the year. The Commodores of the other harbour clubs are also invited as guests. I tried something slightly different after dinner this year as Tim Goodhead (Commodore at ESC) and I did a double act speech about the known history of water sports in Emsworth before the clubs were formed. Some of this was well researched and some was less certain, such as the possibility that Nelson had swum in the bathing pool at the end of Bath Road (now ESC)! As shown in the above photo we had two Emsworth One Design models on display, one made by Frank Parham in the 1930s and the other made more recently by my father John, and Dick Jacobs.

Coming back to the present day, we are just in the process of replacing our largest RIB, Slipper 2, which is twelve years old, and we have just ordered a new Commando with centre console and a larger engine to replace one of the old Commandos with a 4hp engine that is unable to keep up with Oppies in a breeze.

Our Regatta weekend in early September was again a great success with better weather for the dinghy event on the Sunday than for the cruiser "Boulder Dash" on the Saturday. Also in September, we retained the Yoke (also known as the Emsworth America's Cup, photo above), but only just. This trophy is an ornate brass tiller yoke from an Admiral's rowing barge and hangs above the doorway into the bar. ESC had 11 boats on the water to Slipper's 15 and less than 3 points separated the two clubs. Without a doubt it was the best cruiser inter-club event for many years. I am also pleased to say that we have retained the Hare and Hounds dinghy racing series against ESC and Thorney, although sadly the final 2 races had to be cancelled due to lack of wind. In the 4th race in the series we had 46 starters with 28 from Slipper which I think is a record in recent times.

At our prize giving in November, I presented Julian and Judith Murch with the Silver Slipper in recognition of the huge amount that they have both put into the club over many years. You might have expected the previous Commodore to have a bit of a breather, but not Julian. As well as trying to keep me on the straight and narrow he has continued to contribute a lot to Premises including lift maintenance, the balcony project, his legendary plumbing skills and he is currently managing professional brickwork and tiling repairs around the club.

Please make good use of the Club over Christmas and New Year. It will only be closed on Christmas Day and will be open at lunch time as well as in the evenings on the Bank Holidays.

**Happy Christmas**  
**James Mant**

## Tony's 80<sup>th</sup>

Tony Corno's 80th Birthday in June was celebrated by the esteemed Bosun and his team with a short cruise to the Folly Inn and the Blue Crab in Yarmouth. Much jollity was experienced, much quality alcohol and food was consumed. The team is looking forward to the Boat Show as their next outing. Bless them all.



### The team:

Tony, Rex, Julian,  
Clive, John & John



## The Hare & Hounds series

What is the Hare & Hounds competition? These autumn/winter dinghy races were started twenty-five or more years ago as an attempt to encourage inter-club racing between the two Emsworth clubs. A then club member, Peter Campbell, was landlord of the *Hare & Hounds* pub in Stoughton and he kindly presented the trophy we now race for. Hence the name, although I remember one Hare & Hounds prizegiving supper when a stalwart member of ESC arrived at our clubhouse expecting a horse racing evening! But he stayed for the beer.



More recently the series became a three-way match between ESC, TISC and ESSC. It produces some of the best racing



and biggest fleets of the year. Getting on for fifty boats on our short starting line is a great sight and as can be seen here it is also great fun. Naturally we encourage TISC and ESC to try and beat us, but somehow it just doesn't seem to happen very often – could just be weight of numbers of course.

Roger Pratt

*Cheer up Vicky, I said it's fun!*

Photos: Andrew Philipinski

*Dave Valentine getting wet*



## VLAD Tidings

After a winter of hard work which removed a couple of barriers to a sale, I had finally found a good home for *Buster* (my Sonata). The proceeds of this sale, together with a ten year saving plan that had matured the year before meant that I now had a big enough pot of money to fund a replacement. What to replace the Sonata with was easy – an old friend had suggested just after I bought *Buster*: “You should get an Impala, Martin”. And so I did.

I had, obviously, been looking at Impalas on the web over the winter and had discovered that they were thin on the ground. This meant that I knew I would have to travel. So, at Easter, I flew up to Hull to view an Impala there. I got very excited about this yacht, made an offer, had it accepted, paid for a survey and discovered a few “issues” that I had not spotted. So, my offer went down, was rejected and the Impala in Hull went away..... I was rather disappointed when this occurred but a “wanted” ad I had placed on the Impala Owners Association website had led to an Impala in Cork (southern Ireland).

Hence, the May bank holiday weekend found me on the red eye ferry from Fishguard to Rosslare and then driving to Crosshaven for a mid-morning appointment. The lessons I learnt from the Hull viewing, together with a checklist provided to me by the new owner of *Buster* meant that I did not feel the need for a survey this time. After a couple of hours grovelling around in the recesses of the hull, followed by a drive into deepest rural Co Waterford to view the cushions and a loft FULL of sails, a deal was done, deposit handed over and hands shaken. And that is how “*Vlad the Impala*” entered my life.

The next two weeks were a whirl of planning, organising, hiring, shopping, making lists and worrying! But on a Friday afternoon in mid May, Peter Forster, Gillian McCoy, Alastair Pratt and I convened at Alastair’s old house in Southampton and stuffed his car full of kit before heading west. A stop for fish and chips at Gillian’s house in Llantrisant and we were, once again, on the red eye ferry. An early morning drive from Rosslare got us to Crosshaven by 11am. Some paperwork was signed, more money was handed over, further hands were shaken and *Vlad* was mine! After raising the red duster and a courtesy flag, half a bottle of champagne was poured over the stern, with the other half being poured down our throats.

The afternoon was busy. While Gillian did a sterling job in the supermarket, Peter, Alastair and I worked on the boat, preparing her for the trip towards Emsworth. All was completed by 6pm, when we waved Gillian off in a car stuffed with the spare sails and everything else not required on the voyage. The three of us then sampled a few pints of the local produce in the RCYC bar before finding a very nice meal in a Crosshaven pub and falling into bed.

Sunday dawned sunny – after a long, cold winter, summer arrived in the nick of time! After jury rigging one of the lifelines which had sprung during the night (Heath Robinson would have been proud) we slipped our moorings at 8.30 am and headed into the Celtic Sea. Due to a lack of wind, we were motoring and life soon settled down once we were offshore. We quickly discovered that the ship’s compass needed to be swung and, after that, started heading in the right direction! Once two gas rigs had been passed, there was not much to look at – very few birds and no traffic at all. But this made for a less stressful trip (not that I noticed, being a nervous skipper). After a pasta supper, we headed into the night, sailing by now on a very broad reach. Many stars made for easy steering but I struggled to stay awake (I had not been sleeping well for the last fortnight). Thankfully, after my night watch, I did get some sleep. I awoke to find the Scillies on the horizon and an interesting approach had us moored off St Mary’s by 10am. Having no tender meant we had to calculate tide heights so that we could work out what our “window” was for mooring against the quay. Thankfully, this was about 4pm to 10pm, so after a snooze and lunch, we went ashore for showers, shopping, drinking beer and eating steak. Off the wall and back to a deep water mooring by 9.30 for a nightcap and bed at 10 – Stage One of Plan A completed.

Tuesday dawned foggy. Hmm. After much discussion, our planned early morning departure for the mainland was delayed. Peter then rushed around organising a ride ashore, so that he could get home in time to organise the delivery of his new yacht (and *Baldur* is brand new!). So, Alastair and I waved Peter off at about 9 as he had paid for a passage to Penzance aboard the tramp steamer that

carries goods out to the islands. The fog was starting to dissipate by now and a call from Peter mid channel confirmed this. So Alastair and I departed St Mary's at 11.30 and headed east. More motoring and an uneventful trip with supper on the hoof (another Pasta Surprise from yours truly) found us in Newlyn by 8pm. A shower and a walk round Newlyn in the dark and the rain, before a swift pint in a dour pub and another early night.

On Wednesday, once again I was awake at 5.15 (ugh!) to catch the early morning shipping forecast. I did drop off again before we departed Newlyn at 8 for a long day of motoring through mist, fog and mizzle – not the best. We could hear The Lizard but did not see it! Our destination had been Fowey, but after a quick consultation of Reeds and knowing that the weather was very settled, I asked Alastair “how about Mevagissey?”. He was up for it so a sharp turn left and we were soon pootling into the outer harbour. There was a 50 foot catamaran moored next to the south pier, which we gladly used as a floating pontoon (after asking, of course). Mevagissey proved to be a very pretty Cornish market town. Thankfully, we had arrived before all the tourists and had a very pleasant evening ashore, once again sampling the local brew...

Thursday morning was disturbed by fishermen departing at 4am - I was not amused. Away by 8am, the day was another iron topsail workout. Still misty but improving and made very exciting by passing through a game of warships off Plymouth. We saw about eight warships, mock fighter aircraft attacks, choppers flying around and Aldis lamp messaging. Very exciting as we motored along at 5 knots with Otto (the autohelm) steering while Alastair and I jumped around saying “look at that!” like a couple of school boys. Great fun! Start Point was rounded at 4pm and Dartmouth was reached just in time to fill up with fuel before the barge shut for the evening and we moored up at the marina.

Because of an impending house sale, we had all but decided to get as far as Weymouth and then leave *Vlad* (Plan B). This would give Alastair enough time to get all the paperwork sorted over the weekend, as well as doing some packing. But, while passing the Eddystone Light, Nigel Higgs had texted me asking if I needed any crewing help. Well, I jumped at his offer and during the day many texts went backwards and forwards as we made our sedate way to Dartmouth. The outcome of which was that Nigel drove down to Dartmouth on Thursday afternoon and Alastair then took Nigel's car back to Southampton on Thursday evening. Having waved Alastair off, Nigel and I were fed and watered by the Royal Dart YC before a slightly later night.

It was really foggy in Dartmouth on Friday morning and I was a tad concerned about setting off at 6am. But Nigel said that it would be clear outside and he was right – As soon as we left the river we were in bright sunshine and looking back at a wall of fog. Very strange. Another day of motoring but the weather was stunning and Nigel worked on his tan while the highlight of my day was giving the heads a thorough clean. This was in preparation for Caroline Wilkins who was to join us next day. Portland Bill was rounded mid afternoon and as we moored up at the town quay in Weymouth, a friendly face was there to help (Tall Martin is a JOG racing friend and happened to be taking a break from his delivery job on the north pier and had seen the very clear name on the sail cover). The Weymouth flesh pots (OK, Weymouth SC) were visited that night and I poured myself into bed rather later than first planned.



Saturday started slowly but tidal gates meant there was no point leaving until 10am, which we duly did after Caroline had turned up earlier on the first train of the morning. Once again, lots of motoring but the Swanage seacliffs sparkled in the sunshine and we even got allocated a walk ashore berth when we arrived in Yarmouth. Result! *Vlad*'s aft sun-deck was given its first outing before a meal in Nigel's favourite Yarmouth pub (he seems to have one of these in every port – better than having a girlfriend in each one, I suppose).

And so Sunday found *Vlad* and crew on the final leg. When I was planning *Vlad*'s delivery from Cork towards Emsworth I had hardly dared believe that I would make it in one short week. I had Plans B, C and D all

ready to fall back on, with the worst case scenario being a hop across St Georges Channel to Milford Haven. This would have been the bad weather option but would have saved further ferry expenses. But, as it turned out, Sunday was another gloriously sunny summer's day and we departed Yarmouth at noon, after a relaxed visit to the castle. The familiar waters of The Solent made for a relaxed journey back to Chichester Harbour. We even managed some sailing! So, by 6pm, *Vlad* was at rest on her new home in Emsworth Channel after an extraordinarily successful and memorable delivery. My heart-felt thanks to all who helped make it possible, especially Gillian who was a huge help but did not get any sailing!

As I write this, the clocks have changed and the weather is getting worse by the day. But I have a long list of jobs aboard *Vlad* to keep me out of mischief over the winter and I have already started to plan next season's adventures. Bring it on!

Martin Perry



[Vlad in her New Home](#)



"When ships had sails they used the trade winds to cross the ocean. Sometimes when the wind didn't blow the sailors would whistle to make the wind come. My brother said they would have been better off eating beans." William, age 7

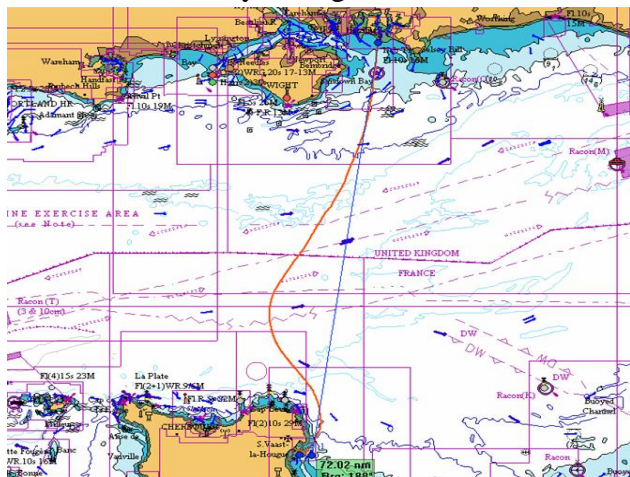
This was culled from a collection of children's writings about the sea. There will be more. You have been warned! Editor.



## **A Bank Holiday Cruise to St Vaast - A Tale of Precision (almost!)**

I planned to tell this story at the Prizegiving, but in my excitement that evening, I completely forgot! It was supposed to be an introduction leading up to presenting the Silver Slipper to Julian and Judith Murch.

I was lucky enough to be invited to sail



with Julian and Judith in "*Melody*" to St Vaast for the bank holiday cruise, with Judy Plimmer joining us for the trip home. Everything was perfect, the weather going across, lovely moon,

flat sea, breeze on the beam etc. Now Julian is a stickler for precision – nothing is left to chance. He has 4 GPSs on board and at least 3 compasses and a DSC radio with a remote handset in the cockpit. Julian has all the latest electronics and they all interoperate in a manner that the Weapons Engineer Officer of an aircraft carrier would be proud of. I am sure “*Melody*” has more installed processing power than the ships that we both served on in the 1990s! Julian’s *seaPro* software on his laptop is sophisticated and precise. I suspect that those who have sailed across the channel will be aware that if you steer to a GPS waypoint on the French coast such that your track is a straight line, you will have a slow trip because the tide on the beam reduces your speed over the ground. It is quicker to stick to the same compass heading and to let the tide take you one way for 6 hours and then the other way for 6 hours. Now Julian’s software draws that curve for you as the predicted tidal stream is built in. So Julian’s GPS cross track error is measured from the curve, not the straight line. It is all very precise. Julian likes to be precise about time as well. On the way out, ETD was set for 2000 from Northney Marina. The last rope left the jetty at precisely 2000.00.00, just like a warship. I have to say that I love sailing with Julian and Judith. Everything is done correctly and there is very little advice to offer. When motoring back across the channel, the motoring cone was hoisted as soon as the first sail was hoisted. Because everything was so perfect I began to think that something must go wrong. But nothing did. On the return trip to Northney, the planned ETA was 2300. We duly arrived at that time with a few centimetres under the keel as we approached the Marina. As I jumped on to the finger pontoon, Julian said “Not bad – 8 seconds early”. As we walked down to the Jetty, I thought to myself, it was all perfect, nothing went wrong – no stories to tell. Imagine my delight therefore as we approached the automatic barrier to leave the marina that it did not move. A look of consternation on Julian’s face. Reverse back and try again. Still nothing! Reverse back much further, approach at speed and then brake. Still nothing! What now? It is 2330 and we are all very tired after a long day at sea. We drive round to the marina office. The 24/7 manned office is closed, a couple of people are near the door, we ask what is going on. “The man has gone to try and sort out an electrical problem, the gate isn’t working”. In desperation we drive back to the gate and Judith, Judy and I get out and with some effort force up the barrier to just squeeze the car underneath. Off we set to Emsworth with some relief, but I have a big smile on my face. There is a story in this voyage after all!

James Mant

## **Blind Week 2010**

Blind Week 2010 in Falmouth this year again had the highest Slipper representation from any single sailing club, with no less than five Slipper skippers being on parade for this annual event!

So why do we do it? Well, I am ashamed to say that I originally volunteered so that I could get in more sailing, rather using the “do gooder” card to make it difficult for objections to more time on the water being raised! But then, after just that first year in 1985, I was hooked on a permanent basis as I had one of the most enjoyable week’s sailing, socialising and fun.

Wariness of just what it means to be sailing with someone who is totally blind or at best, registered blind (there are many facets to being blind, but essentially it means that you can’t see anything that is of much use!), is a mental hurdle that is soon overcome once you get involved. These are, without doubt, amazing people who, if they are putting themselves forward to go to sea, have long since used personality and willpower to access all that society can offer - remember Mr Blunkett? And one of the keenest sailors is the now retired British Ambassador to India, Sir Nick Fenn; although blind, one of the brightest people I have ever met. Blindness is no bar to skiing or waterski jumping and so sailing rather pales when set against those sports!

James Mant had Roger as crew this year. Now Roger is a shipwright whose work is of such excellence that he has commissions from the Greenwich Maritime Museum. One of the boats on the week, a heavy displacement 40 footer had just been re-decked by him, and the quality was amazing, with a very happy owner. Needless to say, Roger has no sight. He is also rather handy with a guitar!

Blind sailors have a good few things going for them on a boat. Their other senses are highly sensitive so every little change in boat attitude and wind is quickly learnt and compensated for; they soon learn where everything is, and move around the deck with confidence; they don't get seasick; they can sail to windward better than a sighted sailor (well, me anyway!). Just don't buy milk one day in a plastic container and the next time in a cardboard one, or you are likely to end up with orange juice in your tea!



But back to the week. The Slipper tally was *Borborygmae*, *Phoenix* (Beverley Lewis), *Rosella* (Geoff McNicol), *Toucan* (Nick Pomfret) and James Mant who was skippering a 42 footer that had been chartered by a trust and donated to the week. Once again Nick sailed the 230 odd mile trip single handed and we all arrived in one piece. It has to be said that we caught some great summer weather, but this was accompanied by very little wind. Two blind crew stepped aboard each boat on the Saturday and then all 23 boats came to the first night dinner at the Royal Cornwall YC. We were royally hosted.

It would be boring to take you through our week's cruise blow by blow; suffice to say that we anchored for one night in the Dandy Hole, a beautiful spot in the Lynher River. By various means all five boats in the fleet ended up in a raft secured to four anchors and the rum was broken out.

We shall never quite know what happened as our calculations had been done and it would have appeared that we should have had enough water at low tide in the "hole". It is thought that the current pushed us to one edge and this circumstance had three of the boats up all night as they took the ground, leaning into each other, masts twanging on rigging. No fun, but thankfully the only damage was to poor *Toucan*, who lost a stanchion, but made a fine jury repair.

After circa 100 miles we returned to Falmouth for the last night's party and many fond farewells.

Next year Blind Week takes place at the most hospitable Royal Southampton Y.C. from 25th June to 2nd July. Grant Morris is the organiser and if you are interested in coming along as sighted crew, or with your own boat, contact him by email [foxys.morris@googlemail.com](mailto:foxys.morris@googlemail.com), or if you have any questions, talk to any of us who were there!

Julian Mandiwall

### **Baldur's delivery trip from Ellös to Emsworth**

In September 2009 Ba and I ordered a new Halberg Rassy 310 and were asked how we wanted it to be delivered. Without hesitation we both said that we would collect it from the HR factory at Ellös which is on the West Coast of Sweden and sail it back to Emsworth.

In April 2010 we loaded the car with all the kit we thought we might need for our trip home and drove up to Ellös via the Harwich Esbjerg ferry and the Fredrickshaven and Gothenburg ferry. We then spent a day visiting the factory in Ellös, taking pictures of our new boat under construction.

We were told that we would take delivery of our boat (now named *Baldur*) at 10am on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June so we travelled up to Ellös again on the 31 of May and spent the night at the small hotel across the road from the HR site. On arrival at HR at 0955 we were met by the sales director who handed us the keys prior to stepping aboard our new shiny boat. We spent an hour or so going through the manuals and being shown where all the cocks etc were, then bent on the sails and went sailing in the Ellös fjord for a couple of hours.



[Proud owners in Ellös](#)



[Rock hopping](#)

We were immediately impressed by our reception and delighted to discover that the boat was ready to go to sea apart from putting our personal gear and food aboard. This we did over the following 24 hours and then took Baldur into the public marina around the headland to get the electronics we had brought with us from the UK fitted by one of HR's staff doing a bit of moonlighting. Once this work was finished Ba and I set off to do some serious rock hopping in and around the islands in glorious sunny and settled weather. We returned to Ellös on the Saturday and met up with Neil Cowell who was to sail with us to Copenhagen.



[Karrington South of Ellös](#)

[Baldur's Route back to the UK](#)

Setting off in a southerly direction we encountered typically British weather, sun, showers, wind and flat calm. However the sailing was at times breathtaking, from lively conditions with rolling seas outside the chain of islands to fast flat seas in their shelter. We visited the island of Marstrand with its historic houses and history as a tri-national city going back to the Hansiatic league. This is a great favourite with Gothenburgers at weekends, but despite that we were unable to buy a bottle of wine unless we had ordered it two days in advance.

Our route followed an inshore passage through a chain of islands passing through narrow gaps between rocks, some with summer cottages on them and others with no light or beacon. A sharp eye was kept for both the rocks and the many ferries moving between the islands. We were very impressed by the high standard of cartography used on the charts once we had got used to the overlap and chart numbering. Along our route we passed many picturesque fishing villages now used as weekend retreats for the city dwellers nearby. We crept into the deserted harbour of Vrangö where there was no discernable sign of life; however the following morning Neil spotted the baker's van outside a shop and promptly bought half the daily bread destined for the island residents!

We then headed out to the Danish Islands of Læsø and Anholt where we saw pods of porpoise close to the boat. The weather had by this time worsened, with the blue skies giving way to low cloud and rain with poor visibility and winds up to 33 knots. *Baldur* revelled in the conditions and with 2 reefs in the main and a reduced jib we made very respectable passage times from one island to the next.

The Danes in common with many European countries expect payment to be made for overnight stops in marinas. Prices are very modest compared to the UK and generally facilities are very good. However if the harbourmaster finds that payment has not been made when he does his rounds a fine is incurred in addition to the standard mooring fee. Many locations have parking meter type pay points that accept credit cards so there is no excuse for 'forgetting to pay'.

Entering harbours could be quite daunting as one had no idea what sort of mooring arrangement would be found. At the beginning of the season it was possible to lie alongside although there was sometimes an extra charge for doing so. More likely there would be a box mooring where payment was related to the width of the vessel or the size of the slot. Occasionally the box moorings had floating ropes to pick up, or alternatively there were Mediterranean facilities where a stern anchor had to be deployed with bows-to mooring on the quay.

We continued south, calling in at Hornbaek a summer resort about 30 km to the north of Copenhagen. Being out of season it was pretty quiet apart from one small bar where we were greeted as honoured English guests by some particularly colourful characters who appeared to have been relaxing for most of the day. The ladies in the bar were keen to get to know us, but fortunately Ba was with us and kept Neil and me on the straight and narrow!

The following morning found us heading for the small Island of Ven our final destination in Sweden. We spent the afternoon walking around this very attractive island before being inveigled into a bar where the annual jazz concert was being held, just before the rain hit us. Eventually the rain stopped and we rushed back to the boat before the next storm arrived, only to find that the snug head to wind berth that we had left was now a very exposed broadside on to the wind. Warps were doubled up and despite the conditions we had a remarkably comfortable night. The following morning we spent a tense few minutes moving the boat between the box berths to a head to wind position prior to setting off to Copenhagen in a full force seven on the nose.

On arrival in Copenhagen, we were lucky to find a vacant bows-to-wind box in a small Marina adjacent to the little Mermaid and had just settled in when we received a text from Al and Gilly to say that they were at the airport and 'where were we'? Within the hour they had made their way to us by public transport and were enjoying a drink on board.

The following day Neil left with Barbara to fly back to the UK and *Baldur* set off in a southerly direction arriving in Rødvig on the Island of Sjælland towards evening. Sailing in Denmark was a very pleasant experience: there are many small harbours and an infinite number of anchorages. Navigation was fun although I did have a few anxious moments sailing in some of the very shallow channels around Æro. So much sea and only the very narrow channels marked on the chart that we had to share with the inter island ferries.



[Sharing the Channel with a ferry](#)



[Al & Gilly's new house by the sea! \(Æro\)](#)

We enjoyed a fairly leisurely few days sailing between the islands, where seemingly every village and large house bordering the sea had some sort of harbour or berthing facility, before setting out for Kiel. An open water sail of about 30 miles with a fresh wind brought us into the Kiel Fjord only to find that we had arrived on the first day of Kiel week. Marinas were full to capacity but despite that we found a comfortable berth for the night alongside two other boats. The following morning I paid the harbour master 18 Euros for the night and wondered how much I would have had to pay in Cowes had I turned up unannounced or indeed if I would have been allowed to stay!

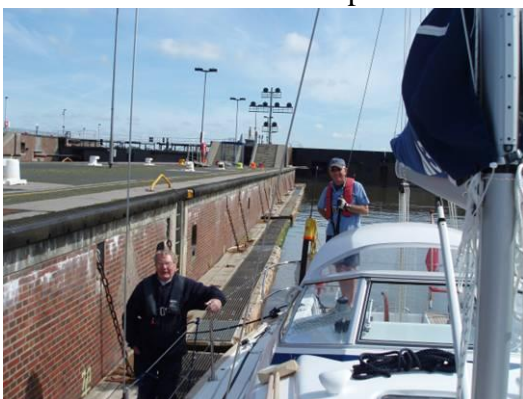
We were thrilled by the sight of a great fleet of square riggers alongside the main quay along with vintage steamships juxtaposed with state of the art racing craft, plus a French trimaran which flew past us on hydrofoils.



All this with naval guard boats and helicopters did much to brighten a rather dull day. We moved to the small holding pontoon at the entrance to the Kiel Canal where we had arranged to rendezvous with Ian and Russ who had flown into Hamburg and were to be the crew for the next leg of our journey down to Amsterdam.

#### [French Trimaran, Kiel](#)

Once farewells were said to Alastair and Gilly we motored round to the lock reserved for recreational craft at the start of the Kiel Canal. Apart from a German yacht we had the lock to ourselves. The picture shows the very low pontoon inside the lock where it was necessary to have fenders floating in the water in order to keep the boat off the pontoon.



We enjoyed a pleasant day and a half motoring through the canal, stopping off at the small town of Rendsburg, on a short spur off the canal, for the night. At the Southern end of the canal we stayed the night at Brusnbuttle in the holding marina. The cost per night at the two holding marinas was 8€ and the transit cost was 12€, with a further 12€ at the commercial marina in Rendsburg!

#### [Lock at the north end of the Kiel Canal](#)

This next leg was the one that I was most concerned over as I had heard many reports of the fierce tides in the Elbe and the extensive shoal waters which could result in very uncomfortable seas. I had planned to leave the southern end of the canal on a neap tide and carry a favourable tide to Cuxhaven, and then a full day sail from there to Nordeney with precious little in the way of a bolt hole if the weather became ugly. In the event it all went like clockwork and we motored from the canal to Cuxhaven and then left the following day at a respectable hour, bucking the tide for an hour or so, and motored in a flat calm all the way to Nordeney. On the way we were treated to the German Navy lifting men out of a life raft into a helicopter and then later in the day having to concentrate on crossing the separation lanes under the watchful eyes of the German pilots on the approaches to the Jade and the Weser.

After a 'rest' day spent shopping for food, clothes washing and boat cleaning we headed out through the maze of sandbanks into the North Sea, where again we found flat seas and no wind and so motored all day outside the Friesian Islands until we closed Schiermonnikoog. Again we followed a torturous channel between the sandbanks and shoals into the beautiful nature reserve of Lauwersmeer (imagine a large Chichester Harbour without any towns or traffic sounds). Arriving in the late afternoon we saw seals and their pups hauled up on the sandbanks, marsh harriers, red kites and storks all within the first hour or so.



[Dutch yacht, Lauwersmeer](#)



[Harlingen town centre](#)

From here we made our way into the Dutch canal system on the Standing Mast Route where we continued for the next day and a half passing through Dokkum and Leeuwarden before exiting into the Waddenzee at Harlingen.



[Russ placing the 'Bruke Geld' into a clog swung out on a string as payment for opening a series of bridges around Leeuwarden.](#)

We were soon passing through a large sea lock from the Waddenzee into the Ijsselmeer then later in the day into the Markermeer. At this stage we had moved from seawater to brackish water to fresh water. With the freshwater came a plague of tiny black flies which completely covered the boat. This was rather unpleasant and we expected that we would have to endure them at our next port of Volendam. However, much to our surprise on entering the harbour the flies vanished and we had a very pleasant stop in a brand new village marina development.

Our next crew change was to be in Amsterdam and we made haste to there in time to meet Ba who arrived at the central station directly opposite the tiny marina of Sixhaven. The evening was passed with some sightseeing in the red light district which was enlivened by the world cup match between Brazil and the Netherlands. The following morning Vivien arrived by train and we said goodbye to Russ and Ian who flew back to the UK.

The next section of the trip was the most frustrating for me as we made our way slowly via the southern leg of the standing mast route through the canals of Holland. Most of the information on bridge and lock opening times is in Dutch and it was easy to miss the subtleties. That, added to the fact that every lock appeared to have differing arrangements for tying alongside. The money spent on buying extra fenders in Ellös was a very good investment. We spent one very long day negotiating a combination of 30 locks and bridges before settling down for the night at a canal side berth, ready for yet another early opening of a railway bridge the following morning. With the benefit of hindsight it would have been better to take two or three extra days over this transit of what is a very interesting landscape.

We continued through the industrial heartland to the east of Rotterdam, making a short stop in Dordrecht where Ba and Viv were dispatched to buy some gin as we were running perilously low. The two ladies were away about an hour having accosted several men asking them 'where can we buy some gin?' They did succeed in their endeavours but not before their reputations had taken a nosedive in the eyes of the locals. Safely back on board we beat a hasty retreat before we had any stowaways!

The pilot notes indicated that the section of the trip around Rotterdam is very much a passage which has to be shared with many barges and ocean going vessels. We therefore made good speed and by evening we were tucked up in a delightful mini marina on the outskirts of Goes. We just managed to get the cockpit tent erected before the heavens opened. We had arranged to meet up with our new crew member Steve in Goes. He was not expected until late the following morning, so we

had an interesting time shopping in the market where many of the locals were dressed in traditional costume.



Crew picked up and quickly settled in, we made our way through a series of non tidal waters stopping off at the very attractive Willemstad and then Middleburg before exiting back into tidal waters at Vlissingen (Flushing). The tide set very strongly to the east as we crossed the main shipping channel to Antwerp. We headed for Breskens with the smell of salt water in our nostrils and the promise of a rest for the remainder of the day.

[A Dutch boy off to find the hole in the dyke?](#)

Breskens has a large if slightly impersonal marina but it is well placed as a striking off point for sailing on to the UK as there is 24 hour access at all states of the tide. We were fortunate enough to have an early morning tide to help us down the coast and by pushing the last of the east going tide managed to carry the west flow all the way to Dunkerque the following day.

Another nine am start saw us leaving Dunkerque in much flatter conditions than those that had greeted us the evening before and we followed the coast with a fine tide under us to Boulogne, where we had to sit outside the entrance waiting for a large ferry to enter. I had been told that Boulogne was not worth going to, but the marina facilities have been modernised and we felt it was friendly and good value.

From Boulogne we could see the coast of England clearly. We cast off at about 0900 for a comfortable passage to Eastbourne making the best use of the tide. In daylight the entrance was hard to spot despite the fact that we could make out the buildings just to the west of the entrance. However once identified we entered the narrow entrance between sandbanks and were soon inside the lock and securely tied up for the night.

Our final leg of the journey saw us leaving Eastbourne an hour before the tide turned west at Beachy head. We then carried the tide all the way to the Owers before heading in to Chichester Harbour on a rising tide. Overall we had made a trip of 1200 miles and had been blessed with virtually no head winds and very little rain.

I would like to thank the following in order of crew changes: Neil Cowell, Alastair Pratt, Gillian McCoy, Russ Wolstenholm, Ian Gardiner, Vivien Reed, all from ESSC and Steve Drew of the PSSA for their advice, help and banter along the way. My special thanks go to Alastair Pratt for lending me charts of most of the route and other information for Scandanavia. And finally my wife Barbara (Ba) for her patience, support and thoroughness, who checked inventories and came back and forth throughout the trip.

Peter Forster.



Andrew Gould and Emma Pethybridge on Lake Garda showing how it should be done.

Photo by Ian Jubb of Sailboat Deliveries

## **Blue Vinny – the boat not the cheese!**

When Judith and I first met at Bath University in the autumn of 1971, my father owned a Salcombe Yawl called *Phantom*, sail number 32. The following summer we started sailing together in her, a good test for any new relationship! Fortunately we proved to be adequate middle of the fleet sailors at Salcombe against quite strong competition, often doing rather well when the conditions were light and fluky. As many members may recall, when we joined Slipper about 20 years ago we were initially very much part of our dinghy scene, first sailing together in an Enterprise, then in RS 400s and RS 200s, until my knees gave out during one Fed Week. We joined the cruiser fleet in 2004 and have thoroughly enjoyed racing *Melody* our Elan 333 with them ever since. I have to admit we thought our dinghy racing days were well and truly behind us when we traded wet suits for oilies.

About a year ago that all changed due my mother's poor health as we had to make frequent visits to Salcombe to help with her care. As we were so often at one of the best sailing venues in the country, Judith and I thought we should at least get a day boat to use in the beautiful harbour during our trips there. There was only one choice... we had to find ourselves our own clinker built Salcombe Yawl but there did not appear to be that many available second hand. However, if you have about £40,000 or more to spare, "Spud" Rowsell of Merlin Rocket fame or one or two other local boat builders will happily build a new one for you! These new boats look too good to put in the water and at that price, not surprisingly only a few are built each year. Less than 200 have been built since they first became a recognised class before the First World War. When we were racing *Phantom* in the 70s the class had only just passed the 100 mark. However, Salcombe is not called Chelsea-on-Sea for nothing and most of the newer boats seem to be owned and raced by wealthy incomers.



So it was against this background and having finally sold our aging RS 200 and RS 400 to Slipper members, we set out find an old yawl, budget limited by the proceeds of their sales. Fortunately, we spotted an advert on the Salcombe Yacht Club notice board, indicating that there were a few old boats still available. They ranged from some that needed a complete rebuild "Terro" style, to those that were in full racing spec. All were at least 25 years old. So we rang the number on the advert to find it had been placed by a local who "looked after" the older boats and we were duly taken to inspect some hulls stored in a couple of barns on a farm a few miles from Salcombe. Surprisingly there was quite a wide choice and needless to say the ones that were ready to sail were out of our price range and

those we could afford would require a lot of work to make them sailable except one, a forty year old boat called *Blue Vinny*.

*Blue Vinny* had been in a time warp and was still fitted out virtually the same as when she had been built in 1969 by the renowned local boat builder Jim Stone. We discovered that she had not been on the water for four years, had only been used for occasional day sailing and fishing in Falmouth by the current owner but had been reasonably well maintained. He had bought her in about 1972 but it had no known racing record. Her newest sails, made by Storrar and Bax, were at least 10 years old and she also came with her original 40 year old set, which would probably blow out if ever used. But it was a "Stone" boat as my father's had been, so it should go well if it had modern fittings and sails... or so I hoped. The down side was that there were quite a few cracked planks below the waterline which I was assured would "take up" in due course. The mizzen mast was so badly warped as to be unusable so would need replacing. Other than that, the boat was complete. It had the advantage of being the only one available with a sound and relatively new combination trailer. So we took the plunge and bought *Blue Vinny*, Yawl 71.

At Christmas last year "BV" was brought back to our house in Salcombe. It just fitted into the garage but then reality struck... what had we let ourselves in for? There was so much to do! Over the course of our many trips west last spring and early summer, the main tasks were to obtain and fit spreaders to the wooden mast and have a new mizzen mast blank made which I subsequently finished myself, fit modern jamming cleats and ratchet blocks to replace the tufnol ones of yesteryear, as well as building a cascade kicker system. I also wanted to bring all the control lines back amidships to mimic the standard RS 400 set up with which I was familiar. Fortunately "Spud" Rowsell not only builds Salcombe yawls, he is also a sail maker who races one of his own masterpieces "*Red Rooster*" (Y 184) at the major meetings in Salcombe. Always very generous with his help and advice, we decided to visit him at his premises in Exmouth where I asked him if he had any second hand sails available. He kindly agreed to sell me a two year old main and jib from his boat at a very reasonable price as well as giving us many valuable hints and tips for setting up an old boat. Whilst we

were there we drooled over *Red Rooster* which was being stored in his workshop. It was like a piece of high quality furniture! By comparison *BV* seemed very tired indeed.

By early May we were still well behind my refit schedule and then reality struck a second time. Would *BV* float? So I put the bungs in and started to fill the hull up from a hose. To my dismay water poured out of every crack and orifice as fast as it was going in... deep gloom! However, after a few days of refilling, the leaks grew less to be replaced by a steady drip. After a couple of weeks when we next returned I was very pleased to still find some water in the hull.

As is so often the case, the best laid plans seldom actually work as conceived. So we arrived in Salcombe just three days before the regatta week in early August, still with much to do as all the control lines, their blocks and jammers had still not been fitted. Two days later, after many hours of trials and tribulation on my part, with the help of my sister and her husband, who are also Yawl owners, we trailed *BV* down to the harbour and rigged and launched her. She floated... just. Judith had to pump for all she was worth! After half an hour we returned to the boat park well pleased with our efforts, still with much to do and Judith completely shattered! The following day after lots of early morning "tweaking" and some rather brutal but essential carpentry, we gingerly sailed *BV* out to the start of the six race Salcombe Yacht Club regatta series.

There are two yawl fleets at Salcombe, one for the new high spec boats and one for the more traditional ones. During the SYC regatta, where often 80 or more yawls take part, the harbour master insists they are split into four fleets due to the width of the start line. *Blue Vinny* was placed in the fourth fleet, reserved for the older boats with lesser known crews.



During the week we really managed to surprise ourselves and many of our fellow competitors. *BV* was a true Stone boat and went very well indeed if sailed properly. By Tuesday we had managed to return results of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> with three races to go. This was so much better than we had ever dared to expect.

Our start was at 14:40 each day, so every morning I was back at *BV* by 08:00, repairing the previous day's damage and making extensive modifications to her set up. A forty year old boat raced hard just falls apart. When you repair one area the stresses move to another part and that then fails. So there were many breakages on the water during the week and many jury rigs required to get us to the finish line but we did survive... well almost! Once *BV* heeled

we had our own on board water feature as the sea gushed in through the higher planks that had not taken up. So Judith had to pump furiously on all the off wind legs. We were becoming really pleased with ourselves having apparently been able to bridge a 30 year experience gap. However, we really had our come-uppance on the Wednesday, the windiest day of the week. Tacking up towards Kingsbridge, one of the mizzen shrouds pulled out of the after deck and the mast came down. We managed to haul it back on board and lash it back up whilst just holding on to our 2<sup>nd</sup> position. We were well pleased with our efforts. However on the next broad reach and almost planning with a lot of water in the boat despite Judith best efforts; there was a lull in which all the water onboard went forward which was followed by a strong gust. The rudder came out of the water and we broached and gently went under; the first time we had ever capsized a yawl! Our fleet including my sister came by us in clouds of spray. She did look rather smug! With great ignominy we were towed home with only two planks showing above the waterline.

There was a very serious re-build the following morning as virtually every screw in all the thwarts and benches had "popped" in the capsize due to the pressure of the buoyancy bags beneath them and the whale pump had been destroyed beyond repair. However, we just made the start of the 5<sup>th</sup> race, with a new pump fitted and still lying in third place overall, with our DNF as our discard. Our dander was clearly up after our capsize and we were rewarded by just winning the 5<sup>th</sup> race. Racing experience at ESSC in both dinghies and cruisers certainly proved its worth during the final race of the six race series. In quite gusty conditions, we managed to lead from start to finish thereby gaining second place overall for the week and great local prestige. Needless to say *Blue Vinny* will not be in the novices' fleet next year but my sister will be. (Hurrah!)

Julian Murch

## **Saluja goes South (Part 1)**

You may recall that I wrote a two part article about our adventures in 2005 when we trailed *Saluja* to the West Coast of Scotland. So far there has been no further use of the trailer and our southerly adventures have been entirely by water. Ever since purchasing the boat, Jon (my partner owner) and I wanted to explore the French canal system a little more than we did on an express anti-clockwise trip round Brittany and back through the Brittany canals to St Malo in 2004.

So, it was with no real fixed plans we set off, in July 2007, from Emsworth to Bembridge on a Friday evening, with the intention of making a daylight channel crossing the next morning to see how far we could get. The forecast was reasonable and we set off pretty early making use of the strong ebb down channel past St. Catherine's and out into the Channel. For my part I don't think I have ever felt quite so rough on a Channel crossing. I have never suffered from seasickness but for some reason I was not much use to Jon (no, I hadn't had an excessive amount of beer the night before!). We were both thankful for having taken a friend, Annabelle, along for the trip and, although an excellent sailor, it was her first channel crossing.

It is interesting to analyse one's decisions after events have taken place. The use of the ebb, mentioned above, had pushed us down channel enough to make Braye on Alderney our first stop. That said we had a most uncomfortable three days and two nights as a low pressure system swept through and kept I guess well over a hundred boats behind the shelter of the breakwater. With no buoys left and rafting up out of the question we had no alternative but to anchor! Braye is a horrible place in inclement weather and the swell seems to diffract round the end of the breakwater causing every yacht there to roll violently. At one point it got so rough that the ferry stopped working, meaning we just had to endure it. On chatting with anyone about 2007, all they remember is a very rough season and, who knows, had we diverted to Cherbourg then we might not have gone as far as we did. We managed to play a bit of 'flyer' on the second night by persuading the harbour master that we needed to dry out in the inner harbour to renew the rudder downhaul (this was actually true!). It's just that we happened to forget the times for the evening tide and ended up having a very calm night dried out on the bottom. We cleared out before breakfast and the Harbourmaster was none the wiser - oh the joys of a lifting keel boat!

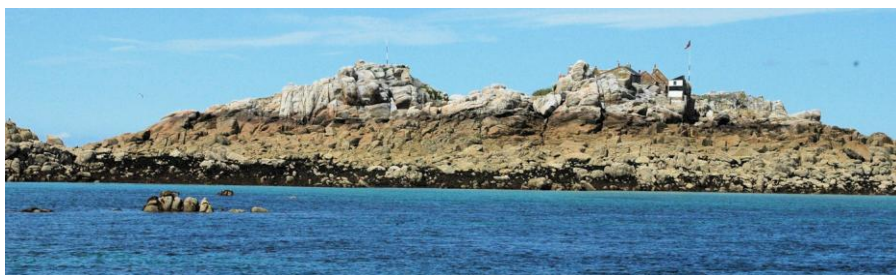
The worst of the weather was by now through, so we opted to go via the Swinge to St Peter Port on Guernsey. There was a significant sea running and I will always recall Annabelle's face as *Saluja* got thrown around by the seas. She had only really experienced charter boats above 38ft until then, so needed some re-assurance that a Super Seal is a very seaworthy boat, even if tender and light. The seas moderated and the sun came out allowing a lovely sail, complete with all the necessary visual pilotage, to St Peter Port where we bumped into our then cruiser secretary Hugh Kennedy who had just arrived from Cherbourg in his Sadler 29. What better reason to share experiences over a meal and a few beers together.

By now the weather had settled for a few days such that we really made the most of it and left for St Aubin in Jersey. Hugh kindly agreed to look after Annabelle and see her on to the ferry, as she needed to return to the UK for other commitments. St Aubin was a chance decision and again the joys of the Super Seal. Up with both rudder and keel at low tide, over the pulpit without so much as Jon getting his feet wet to place the anchor and walk ashore for a bit of a reconnoitre prior to going into the drying harbour. If you haven't ever been there, then please let me recommend it as a far nicer place for a stop over than St Helier. We spent the whole of the next day and night there and took advantage of the regular bus service to go into St Helier.

With the weather really settled by now, we made the decision to attempt to land on the Minquiers the following day. With no clear guidance in the pilot, we opted for a dead low water approach from the south east to the main anchorage. Be warned that the best charts

do not have a proper survey of all the rocks in this approach. It was incredibly light with no swell so we decided to take the risk. That said we had a few scary moments as rocks broke the surface just metres from our side. Clearly we took a calculated risk and went dead slow with Jon on the foredeck looking out for rocks in the crystal clear water. We had to reverse out and re-trace our steps a couple of times but at least we knew that the tide was by then rising if we were to hit the bottom (AND we had a lifting keel!). I would definitely NOT advise anyone to do this in a fin-keeler but instead get the proper pilotage directions which are available from the Jersey sailing clubs (which we learned about once on the Minquiers) which give an approach from the north above half tide (I think). Having survived the stress of the approach, what a fantastic place and how nice to be actually greeted by a guy who owns one of the little cottages there. He was an elderly gentleman who had waited for decades to purchase what were essentially four low derelict walls ready to be renovated into a one roomed cottage. He was also a retired lifeboat coxswain who had experience of rescuing “one or two” from the Minquiers. A short walk ashore allowed us to see the helipad and flagstaff with the largest union flag I have ever seen. (Please be reminded that the UK and France very nearly went to war over the Minquiers – I think I am correct in saying that we retain sovereignty with the French having fishing rights). We also took time to make use of the most southerly building in the British Isles. It is also a leading mark - see photos!

We cleared out of the Minquiers with enough time to make Granville to enjoy one of the best assiettes de fruits de mer I’ve ever tasted. And wow, what a tidal range! The largest in Europe? (No, the Severn Estuary at 15.9 metres is the second highest in the world. Editor).



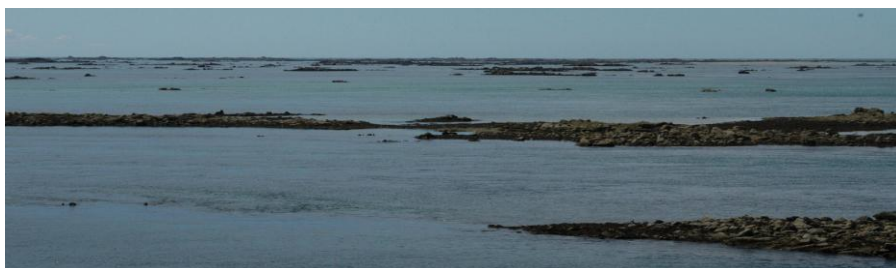
Rocks to dodge

The leading mark!



The next day we went on to St Malo, where I left Jon, to catch the ferry home to do my part in supporting my son, and ESSC, at Chichester Harbour Fed week. *Saluja* was left with a slightly weeping stern gland so I was despatched with a list of tools and spares to send out with Jon’s wife whom I met

at Portsmouth station to take her to the St Malo ferry terminal. Subsequently Jon dried the boat out on a beach and withdrew the prop-shaft to change the stern



Rocks, rocks and more rocks – looking west over the Minquiers

gland over a tide. A brave man! We rejoined the boat a week later at Dinan, having left the van, and *Saluja*’s cradle, at Foleux and caught the train back – starting with TGV, at 100mph+, and ending with a one coach ‘train’ from Dol de Bretagne to Dinan.

As mentioned above, August 2007 was very wet so we spent the next four or five days in the pouring rain with full oilskins and wellingtons just to transit the canal to Rennes.

Imagine our alarm on learning, at the last lock before Rennes, that we could go no further because of the river level being too high in the Villaine. In mid summer in Brittany the usual problem is a lack of water in the canals, not too much of it! Luckily the next morning we were told that the river had been re-opened after a few days of dumping water down all the weirs to the sea. The weather improved and we had a really enjoyable trip down the Villaine, often in the company of an Australian couple in a hire-boat. We reached Redon with a few days to spare so made the decision to go west on the Nantes to Brest canal and then follow the little river up to la Gacilly. A delightful place only slightly marred by me grounding the keel fairly hard on our return. Again the joys of a lifting keel meant we were able to bring the keel home, repair the damage in the comfort of Jon's garage, and return with it the next season.

We had already pre-booked the boat to be lifted at the yard at Foleux. This is an excellent yard and most professionally run by the guys there. As always, we got chatting to someone whose Nicholson 32 was being lifted. He did us a massive favour by suggesting we should not rush down the Biscay to Bordeaux and through the 'Midi' the following season, but rather we should spend at least a season cruising the south coast of Brittany. We took this advice, but that will be described in the next instalment.

David Holmes



Claire Coussens, Sarah Smith and Helen Weekes at our recent Prizegiving

Photo Julian Mandiwall

### And Finally.....

I am preparing this, my first attempt at putting our newsletter together, during the spell of exceptionally cold weather at the beginning of December. Just reading about cruises that took place in summer weather is an antidote to all the cold outside, and the photo of Andy Gould on Lake Garda brings back to mind the pleasures of a great cycling holiday Fiona and I had there a few years ago, based at Riva del Garda. Riding up the Dolomite passes was enough to keep anyone warm. Julian's article reminds me of my countless races over the years in the wonderful Salcombe estuary – I first raced there in 1951 in a National 12. The world is a wonderful place. There are many ways to explore it. Doing so in one's own boat is very special. We are indeed privileged.

And last but not least, I wish all our readers a super Christmas and the very best for 2011.

**Roger Pratt**  
Editor

Transom piece: "If you are surrounded by sea you are an island. If you don't have sea all round you, you are incontinent." Wayne age 7.

