



SLIPPER SAILINGS
Spring 2009

Thank You, Julian!

It is fitting in this issue to set down a few words of appreciation about our past Commodore and now Vice President, and indeed to Judith who has been such a support to him. He came to us – Captain Murch indeed - and we all wondered how we would survive the expected rigours of serving under him as Commodore. However, there was little need to worry, he became a proper civilian in no time at all and it was rare to have an order barked out at one unless one was really misbehaving! His achievements are legion and as Commodore he reorganised the club cleaning, saw through the no smoking policy, led the purchase of a new marquee, masterminded the upgrade of the function room, established the new training room, founded the store room, sorted out the kitchen and catering problems, had new boilers installed, produced a great new microphone and sound system for the clubhouse, built a new kitchen in Jenny's flat, protected our rights at 36 On The Quay, dealt with Havant Borough Council and the Environment Agency over the vicissitudes of the Mill Pond, dealt with our lease holders, brought our rules up to modern standards and was responsible for efficient premises husbandry. On top of that his priority was always to improve and support our reason for existing – the sport of sailing.

Now, he did not paint every door jamb and perform every job because, as ever in this club, there was much voluntary help – but we know from experience that any man does not attract loyalty and help unless he possesses high qualities. Like previous Commodores he has spent literally hundreds of hours in the service of our club, especially with his professional skills as plumber and electrician.

Many members enjoy this club and not all can possibly realise the amount of time it takes to be the conductor of the complex orchestra that makes up the Slipper. The Club is most appreciative – and to have to face and conquer cancer and major surgery during this period is a testament to the man.

Julian Murch, we thank you.

The ESSC members

Commodore's Corner



I am delighted to introduce the first newsletter of 2009 and many thanks to Martin Perry for putting it all together. The AGM and the launching of the new Slipper Website now seem a long time ago, as does the icy winter and the frozen millpond. Having been concerned last year



about the difficulty that the Environment Agency had with refilling the millpond, this year they haven't yet emptied it. That is not quite what we had in mind! Please be assured that trying to influence the Environment Agency to ensure sufficient water for our sailing activities remains a top priority.

In February, Ruth Austen, our Honorary Secretary, announced that she would have to stand down, after some 10 years in the role, having accepted the offer of a full time teaching post in Petersfield. Vivian Reed was quick to step forward as our new Honorary Secretary, and I am very grateful to her. I hope as many of you as possible will get to know Viv as she makes her contribution to the running of your Club.

On New Year's Eve, Angela Anderson, Mary Alston, Beverley Lewis and Caroline Manton set off to take part in the Langkawi Yacht Regatta in Malaysia. In spite of some initial difficulty with which yacht to sail on, they did extremely well to come 2nd in their class. This was followed by some sightseeing in Malaysia – it is amazing where WOW can get to! Please see the separate article by the WOW girls.

In February it was a great pleasure to introduce our new weekend caterers, Karen and Trevor. I am sure that those who have sampled their fayre will agree that they are providing us with an excellent service. We are very grateful to them and wish them every success. Trevor is currently recovering from a serious operation - We wish him well and look forward to seeing him back at the club once he has fully recovered.



Most of you will have seen the new store room in the entrance lobby, beautifully constructed by John Anderson, and the new floor which has recently been laid because of water damage. You are less likely to have seen (although you may have heard!) the great works that have been going on in the Wood Barn to move the mast racks to the edges. This work eases access for masts and has made a good open space if masts need to be worked on. This is all thanks to Hugh Kennedy and Pete Wells.

May I also record my thanks for all the regular voluntary work that goes on in the background, largely unnoticed, to keep our boats, premises, membership, admin, training, accounts, bar, moorings and website in order to be enjoyed by all.

This introduction would not be complete without mention of the extraordinary panto that was brilliantly organised by Jackie Oiller. Some 30 members and 4 youth members took part, not to mention those supporting lighting, music, costumes and scenery, and the cast gave up most Sunday evenings for 5 months to put on 3 shows. Judging by the audience reaction, it was very much enjoyed and appreciated. Best of all, by seeking donations to leave the room, we raised £1053 for the Piam Brown Ward at Southampton General Hospital where they are seeking to build a specialist cancer ward for teenagers. Please see the separate article by Jackie Oiller on the Panto.

A very successful lift in has just taken place and I can do no better than to echo the words of our Rear Commodore Sailing, Hugh Kennedy:

“My thanks to all those who contributed to an excellent, cool, calm and controlled lift-in. There were no unnecessarily raised voices and all the teams worked like well oiled machines! A particularly big thanks to: Peter (Bomber) and Alastair for organising the weekend and Chris for organising the Cruiser Supper. The constant supply of tea, coffee, and bacon/sausage baps were also a major part of the weekend’s success – so a big thanks to those who helped in the kitchen! A special thank you to those without boats to lift-in that gave up their time to help out. I am not going to name all of the weekend’s other major players – because I am bound to miss someone out– but you know who you are, so a big thanks to all of you too!”

Finally, may I wish you all an excellent season on the water. I can’t wait to get out there myself!

James Mant

Fired with a glass of Semillion
I thought, “I’ve an idea – a silly one
To be commodore
I would deeply adore
But sadly my name isn’t Julian!”
(or, for the future: But sadly my initials ain’t JM!” – Editor)

WOW Goes International



In January, we left the chilly shores of Chichester Harbour for the much more comfortable and sunny Malaysian waters around Langkawi. We were there for the 7th Royal Langkawi Regatta – and to stay on for a bit of sight-seeing afterwards. Caroline (Manton) had talked about life in Langkawi and sailing the local waters so much that we felt we should check it out!

When we arrived, Caroline gave us the bad news. The boat we had arranged to crew on had pulled out of the regatta (pronounced “regaarhta” out there). We thought our chances of finding a boat needing 4 crew, at short notice, was slim. However, fortune smiled on us. On the Monday, Amandlar Star, a 45 foot Beneteau First arrived and when the skipper registered for racing, said he was looking for crew. A phone call and a meeting shortly after secured us all a place. It was too late to take part in the practice race on the Monday but we were ready and raring to go for the first race on Tuesday.



Despite being the first time we had sailed with the skipper and his wife, and despite being unfamiliar with the boat, we managed to get a 2nd and a 3rd place on the Tuesday - Not a bad start to the week. Day two saw a 2nd, day three a 3rd, while days four and five saw two more 2nd places. This placed us 2nd overall, in class.

The sailing was tough, needless to say, with blistering sunshine and fabulous scenery every day. The locals commented on the strong winds that continued all week (only F5, 20-25kn winds!). Jet lag was soon forgotten as the racing got underway.

But regattas are not just about sailing - It is important to enter into the spirit of the event and join in with the socialising in the evenings. De-briefing took place at the bar when we got back to shore. This was followed by a quick shower and change, before returning to the yacht club for the evening entertainment and daily prize giving.



The pink T-shirts identified us as the **WOW** girls from England both **on** the water, **off** the water and **in** the water!!!!

After the regatta finished, the owners of the boat invited us out for a day's cruising; leisurely sailing around jungle clad islands, stopping at a deserted sandy beach for a picnic and a swim. We could see why many sailors cruise the Asian shores and often stop when they get to Langkawi and the Malaysian coast. Sailing 'round the island' now has a new meaning for us!

Sailing Essentials:

The regatta is run like a Malaysian Cowes week, with three different sailing areas used over five days. One area was in the sheltered water close to the main island. The other main area was out in the open water off the islands. One day was a 'round the island' race which took us around one of the many islands scattered along the Langkawi shores. On this race we met fluky winds and wind shadows. The wind direction changed frequently as it blew off the land and funneled between the islands. Beautiful scenery and challenging sailing!

Angela Anderson, Mary Alston, Beverley Lewis, Caroline Manton
WOW

Thank you to Richard Swaine for the lovely photo of our esteemed stewardess. He titled it "In the mood" - Editor



Social Scene

Our 2009 social programme has got off to a good start with Mike Hackman taking us on a trip down memory lane with his history of the Club. This was followed closely by the Hare and Hounds supper. The highlight of the year so far has undeniably been the magnificent performance from many of our members in their rendition of 'Sinderella'. It's not everyone who can boast sleeping with the hairy godmother but then again, is that such a bad thing!

Looking forward we have our annual darts match on Good Friday, this year hosted by Dell Quay Sailing Club. This is a free evening where anyone can turn up and throw a few darts in friendly company, numbers are required for catering purposes only so if you are interested in joining us, please let me know. Practice sessions are held in the bar each Thursday evening. If you're unable to participate in the match this year, why not join in on any Thursday evening in preparation for next year?

Your social committee is working hard to bring you a variety of events so look out for a fun evening of Salsa dancing with chilli and margaritas and we shall be supporting "Tea by the Sea" again this year. This is a fund raising afternoon where we join 'Sail 4 Cancer' in providing tea by the sea. We are planning this for Sunday 10th May, when we shall be asking for donations of cakes once again. Your generosity has been invaluable in the past so we are hoping for more of the same.

One of our main social events of the year is our Summer Ball. This year the theme is 'White Ties and Tiaras' and will be held on Saturday 4th July. Last year we were so impressed by the time and effort people had put into their masks, so this year we can't wait to see if you can surpass yourselves. On this note, happy planning and we hope to see you at a social event soon. Details and dates of all our social events can be found on the website which is updated regularly.

Sarah Thorsby
Hon Social Secretary

A Few Words on Adult Dinghy Sailing Courses

Looking back over some of the old Slipper programmes it can be seen that in some years a series of adults courses would be run. “Back to Sailing”, “Start Sailing”, “Improving Sailing”, “Start Racing” and “Women Sailing” (before WOW took off). How did we fit it all in? Trying to fit the adult courses in with the racing and Junior programmes can be interesting! But, the main thing is to get afloat. The RYA courses may have changed in detail, however the ethos of getting new members and existing members afloat remains the same. For some years now we have had 'proper' training boats to use. Gone are the days of running a course and having to use a hotchpotch of boats to sail. Many of our young instructors probably haven't sailed a 30 year old narrow Merlin Rocket, an Albacore, Enterprise or a GP14 with a dodgy rudder. Things have moved on for the better.

So, how do the club adult dinghy training courses work now?

ESSC follows the RYA syllabus which does have the advantage that all the instructors know what sailing skills have to be covered and allows members to gain a recognised qualification. The most important one is the Basic Sailing Skills - RYA Level 2.

Let's look at these courses the Slipper runs:

RYA 1 - Introduction to sailing, often combined with a Level 2 course. Not run very frequently on its own - once every few years.

RYA 2 - The fundamentals of sailing, covers the 5 Essentials. This certification enables you to hire a dinghy anywhere in the world. We run this once a year and tend to use two man boats for this course.

RYA Improvers (the old RYA Level 3)

Seamanship - Applying the 5 Essentials in more demanding sailing conditions and solving problems afloat. We run this once every few years.

Day Sailing - Passage planning, cruising, basic navigation, down harbour over one tide. Again, run once every few years.

Sailing with Spinnakers – an introduction to and getting the most out of asymmetric and conventional spinnakers. Run once every few years.

Courses run with specialist instructors include:

Start Racing - how to start club racing and getting around the course. Run once every few years at ESSC - requires a Racing Instructor.

Performance Sailing - getting the most out of your boat, using all of the controls. Run once every few years - requires an Advanced Instructor.

So, look out for this year's courses. If you would like an excellent refresher or simply a book to start picking things up, the RYA publish an excellent guide, Start Sailing G3 Cost £4.99.

A few important points we have picked up over the years:

- There is no guarantee of good weather - in 2008, we ran a RYA 2 course in late September and had superb weather. Often the weather is bad in June and July making it difficult to complete courses.
- Some years we have more instructors than students, and others more students than instructors - please before signing up, check you can make all of the dates.
- We do like to teach in your own boat, IF it is seaworthy and can be rigged at ESSC.
- New instructors are always welcome to help and gain experience.
- Anyone with a Power Boat Level 2 or above is always welcome to help the sailing instructors.
- Courses tend to run in the evenings midweek with occasional weekend days. Complete weekends seem more feasible outside the main sailing season.
- Instructors act on an entirely voluntary basis. A complete week's course does put additional strain on instructors - please be patient.
- Our database does not include records of qualifications at this level. If you only complete part of a course for any reason, please keep your log books up to date. Other instructor led sessions can be used to complete sign off.

Finally can I take this opportunity to thank the instructors who have helped over the years and I hope will continue to make the courses very productive and enjoyable.

Chris Tyler
Senior Instructor

The Brittany Canals 2008

We were all ready to leave Emsworth Quay. A group of friends were there to wave us off. We motored down Harbour for a few hundred meters and the engine seized! Really seized. The main seal had blown and there was lots of oil in the bilges. I was a little disappointed as the top end had recently been serviced. Thanks to Dick Howell and Julie Peart for the tow back to the quay the next morning for the engine to be condemned. A trip to Poole followed to collect a new Bukh 24 and this had Jackie saying "well, it's only money!"

We set off again early in the morning of 26th June, intending to sail to Cherbourg, but West Pole had a forecast of SW 4 to 5 increasing 6 later so Cowes seemed a good idea. Spent four nights at the Folly before moving on to Yarmouth for a further two nights. Forecast was reasonable for the next day so set alarm for 4am and ventured out through the Needles on a calm but overcast day. It was about this time that Jackie called up from below to inform me that we had no power to any of the instruments! To my relief, I found that the main Battery switch had been knocked off. Notice, no blame attached here, panic over.

The crossing to Cherbourg was uneventful as we motored most of the way. I did have a problem with the relatively new Autohelm 2000+ as it would not hold the boat on course. So it was tiller between my legs for fifteen hours but we arrived safely in Cherbourg.

Got to know Cherbourg quite well after ten days of strong winds and made friends with a couple and their son on a Nicholson 32. On or around day five the weather seemed to offer a window so we

once again set the alarm for 0400 hrs. Got a forecast on the internet, still a bit iffy and as we are only two up decided to wait. Geoff in the Nich 32 decided to go so we said our farewells and returned to bed. Around 10am we were surprised to see Geoff come back into the berth beside us. They got as far as the Alderney race, met some rather nasty seas so decided to return to Cherbourg. Geoff, we found out, was at one stage a navigator in the RAF and when I mentioned another colleague of mine Des Smith was also an RAF navigator, Geoff said, "I know Des" and so we were able to put them in touch. Small world isn't it?

Eventually, a really good sail to Guernsey, arriving 7 hours after leaving Cherbourg. I was a bit apprehensive about the Little Russell as I had read the Sailing books! But it was plain sailing. We had a red light on entering Guernsey so waited. A small motor boat proceeded into the harbour and as he entered a cannon was fired from the Castle. I thought this was a bit severe until I realised it was the Noon Day Gun! Put watch back to BST. Met up with Mike Sullivan and Tony Tick who were sailing Mike's Westerly to the Roche Bernard, as Mike has now moved to France.

July 16th. Left Guernsey bound for Jersey with a fine light southerly breeze, allowing us to make good time. We were visited by Dolphins prior to La Corbiere which is always a magical moment. Left La Corbiere lighthouse to port when we heard four long blasts and on looking behind saw a rather large warship approaching my stern fast. Where did that come from? Made a rapid course change to port and watched as it passed rather closer than we would have liked. I think they get bored and play chase just for fun. It's OK if you are the cat but not when you are the mouse!

Apart from Jersey being on the way, we have a cousin living there and so it was a good chance to catch up and get a free meal! Whilst in Jersey marina we were aware of a vessel leaving one morning and heard a bump as he bounced his way out of the marina. Shortly after this, the port authority called the vessel back on the VHF to explain his actions.

Left St Helier on the 20th July bound for St Malo, the wind being a light Southerly so not a lot of sailing. Left the Minquies to Port and the wind decided to swing into the North which made for an uncomfortable ride towards St Malo. The passage took 11 hours partly due to me letting the tide carry us too far West so that we were making land fall at Cap Frehel. Our new engine came into its own as we punched the tide towards St Malo. I have been into St Malo but usually on a Brittany Ferry – This was still a help in recognising the various marks, though. We were glad to get into the shelter after being rolled around in the confused sea.

We decided to stay in the St Servan marina and were met by the marina staff and escorted to a berth well inside the marina where they now have toilets on the pontoon - Not exactly en-suite but close. Met up with Paul Watkins and gained an extra hand in Paul's son Jono for a very pleasant trip through the barrage and into the Rance.

Arriving in the Rance we really felt we had achieved our goal and would not need to listen to a forecast for some time to come (apart from Jackie wanting to know the sunbathing forecast!). It really is a delightful place to sail, so quiet and peaceful. We made our way to Plouer sur Rance which was more expensive than Yarmouth, 30 Euros, and without the same facilities. But we had arranged to meet up with Paul to drop off the sails and life raft. Met up with Dave Holmes who was on his way down to Foleux and he insisted on coming to Dinan with us as this was the one bit of the canal he hadn't travelled down. Sharon phoned ahead to book crane.



Mast Party - Sharon, Dave, Paul, Jono, Me and Jaque (our French friend)

The following morning started in a haze which Jackie called a hangover, most unfair. Left mast party at Dinan and Jackie and I started our trip into the Canals. Passed through 5 locks: Lehon, Tressaint, Boutron, La touch and Betineuc. We arrived at Evron at 14:25 having left Dinan at 10:45. Locks on this stretch close at 12:15 for one hour but there is always a holding pontoon prior to each lock. The lock keepers were all male on this stretch and Dave had promised me they were female! Oh well, its early yet. Evron is a quiet stop over with shops close by, facilities a bit basic but as we were to find out, most places on the canals are FREE, even the electricity. The weather was not brilliant - In fact, it rained! The following day started dull but by midday the sun came out and it was hot. Decided to walk to a nearby Chateau, which was further than we thought and only open on a Thursday. Today is Saturday!

Stayed overnight in Tinteniach, where a good local Fete was going on so joined in the fun. Not much in Tinteniach. The village has a small restaurant come bar but we did not venture into the village as it was a Sunday. Moved on the next morning to Hede. This is a series of nine locks that take you to the summit of this stretch of the Canal. We stopped part way at La Madeleine, a large Basin with only two other boats for company. A good Museum explaining the history of the canal system allowed us to while away a very pleasant hour or two. It's about a two mile walk into the village but it has a good Super U. Just after arriving back at the boat the heavens opened and it rained from 4pm till 8pm. The cockpit cover came into its own.

The next day needed patience, as we arrived at the first lock at 09:15 while the lock keeper arrived at 10:00, with no explanation. Climbed through seven locks in one and a half hours, then moored at La Plaisier for lunch. Made our way to next lock for 13:30 but no sign of lock keeper. Eventually found her on her computer in a small shed! Arrived Lengager lock having travelled 10.5 Km in 5.5 hours. Overnight stay and walked into Montruel-sur-ille to replenish stocks.



Moorings are free!

The following morning we awoke to brilliant sunshine so spent a lazy day ambling along enjoying the wildlife, kingfishers and lots of herons. Made our way to St Gregoire only to find quay wall under repair. Le Eclusier seemed keen to practice his English and advised us to pass through lock and moor on waiting pontoon. The shops are a short walk from the canal with a good super market. One of the two bikes on board had a puncture, so found a cycle shop and purchased a new inner tube. I fitted the new tube, pumped up the tyre and it went down almost immediately! So, I removed the inner tube, pumped it up, immersed it in the canal, no sign of a leak, put it back, pumped up the tyre and it went flat again! Threw bike into canal – Well, I felt like it. We later found out that through lack of use the valve was sticking. You live and learn!

St Gregoire is a good place to stop prior to travelling through Rennes. Others who have done the trip say that Rennes is not a good place to stop and although we passed straight through Rennes there are places with boats moored in the centre that looked OK to me. At the last lock out of Rennes I noticed a large complex and asked Le Eclusier what it was, but he didn't know. It turned out to be the Rennes Football Stadium!

From Rennes you enter the river Villain, so it's all downhill now. We arrived at the lock for Port Rean late afternoon and had to wait whilst a party of school children came through in canoes, some backwards, most entertaining. Port Rean is a delightful place with a very good restaurant near the bridge. It transpired that the owner has a daughter who owns a restaurant near the lock at Boel so we decided to move on the following day a few Km downstream to Boel and try her restaurant. Nice place to stop and enjoy some good Moules. One of the down sides of this part of the Canal is that the railway line follows the course of the river and so you are never far from a train! This part of the river has quite a few rocks but all are well buoyed. The fishermen are not, though, and you need to keep a keen watch for them. We also found that our hooter came in useful to warn of our approach. They do tend to put out three or four rods and then retire to a tent or their cars!

Our next stop was at Messac as it appeared to have good facilities. It is used by one of the cruiser hire companies but is run by the local authority and they do not work at weekends. Although the

facilities are there you cannot use them at weekends as you need a code for the showers. However, the good point is that you cannot pay the mooring fee. On reflection, it would have been better to have passed through the lock and stop at Guipry as this is nearer the shops. We discovered this later when we passed through the lock on our way to Besle. This trip to Besle village was wet. We moored up alongside the wall and spent a wet night under the cockpit cover. The local youths use a shelter near the quay for their evening entertainment and become noisier as the evening progresses. Oh well, you are only young once. We walked into the village the next morning only to find most places shut as it was a Monday. I thought Monday was a week day but when in France..... We never did get used to the vagaries of French opening hours.

We left Besle on route to Redon. On the approach to Redon, the Navicart says that there is a “grand vannage ou barrage insubmersible” and as we approached I could see no sign of it. I began to wonder if it was submerged and if so how much depth did we have? I continued slowly to a point where I was sure we had passed over it, only to find out later that it is no longer there. It was put there to control the flow on the river and now that the Barrage has been built at Arzal it is no longer needed. We found one or two mistakes in the Navicart!

Redon is a good stop over to stock up on supplies and 16 Euros for the privilege. The marina is right in the centre of town and is worth having a wander around, particularly the old part which is very interesting. Captainery very helpful and although Jackie thought he looked like Gerard Depardieu, he didn't do anything for me! Fuel is available in the Port. We had a text from Dave and Sharon Holmes aboard Saluja suggesting we meet at Rieux about 6Km downstream. This we did, mooring up alongside Saluja and enjoying a good evening together: Nice meal, perhaps a little too much wine - Ask Sharon.

Dave suggested we travel down to Foleux with them as he had arranged a mooring. It would also enable us to talk to the yard and book our lift out for later. The yard were very helpful and said just turn up. We arranged with Dave to meet his partner in the boat, who just happened to be coming out at the end of August for a week's sailing, plus bringing the Van. We could put our gear in the van and catch the train home. I hadn't really thought this bit through but I suppose we would have had to go back to the boat in our car and bring as much gear as possible home. We are very grateful to Dave and Jonty for this offer. We travelled back to our boat with Dave and Sharon and they stayed aboard and left for St Malo and the ferry early in the morning.

We decided to go South down the Nantes to Brest Canal. We entered the canal just upstream of Rieux and made our way to Guenrouet. This canal is really quiet and we were surprised if we saw another boat. It was at Guenrouet that I made a mistake that was to cost me our mast headlight! The wind was quite strong and the finger pontoons rather narrow. I was concerned at approaching downwind so decided to come round between the land and the pontoons in order to come into the wind. But I failed to look behind me and as I swung around into the berth, caught the mast on a tree and this removed my mast headlight and deposited it in the canal. We tied up and disappeared below to hide my embarrassment. The next morning dawned bright and sunny and we left the berth with no further mishaps. Had a very pleasant trip to Blain, although we did have to wait for the lock keeper to have lunch and on this stretch they have a two hour lunch. On arrival at Blain we found that moorings were a bit scarce. The first one we tried was too narrow and the second one only just wide enough which meant we had trouble fendering. Blain is really nice with free moorings and free electricity. It's a short walk into town with an Aldi supermarket. There is also a Super U further away but the problem is carrying the shopping (wine bottles are heavy!). Maybe one of those shopping trolleys with wheels would be worth investing in, although I think Jackie might worry about looking like a Bag Lady.

We had arranged to meet up with friends who were returning from the Ile de Re. Slept seven on board that night - Bit of a squeeze but we are good friends! Very good market in town and we found

a stall selling cooked chicken Breton Style, excellent. Friends left to catch the Ferry and two more arrived. Each August, Blain has a three day Carnival; the first day of which is the market and the second a parade with lots of the surrounding villages bringing floats. Very entertaining and funny. Then on the Sunday they have a night cycle race around the town followed by fireworks. Only the French would do something like this. We watched the fireworks from the cockpit with a glass of wine, or two.

Left Blain at lunchtime going south aiming for Glenat. It rained on and off most of the afternoon and on arrival we discovered that although the Navicart listed showers and W/C, the showers didn't work and the W/C was basic to say the least! There is also a new motorway just upstream of the mooring area, but it was too late to go anywhere else so we put up with it. We left here early the following morning to make a full days run to Norte St Erdre. You enter the river Erdre at Quiheix and hang a left. It was at this lock that I was asked for my ships registration documents, the only time in ten weeks.

The run up to Norte St Erdre is very attractive with many large houses with their own mooring docks cut into the bank. Norte St Erdre is a charming place and is the furthest navigable point at the top of the river. It has all the facilities you need including a good Super U in easy walking distance of the Port. Again the mooring was free for the first three days. Monday was a bank holiday so we decided to pump up the dinghy and row up stream. In Jackie's diary it says, "what a superb trip, we rowed for one and a half hours"- No WE didn't, I did. But it was a good trip. I rowed as far as the ford and we then had our picnic and rowed back, this time with the stream. Sorry to leave Norte St Erdre but I am sure we will be back.

Left after a lazy morning on the 15th August, made the lock at Quiheix late afternoon and decide to stop alongside the river bank for the night. Moored up Rick Stein style tied up to two trees, in peace and tranquillity. Well, it was until a car and van came down the tow path on the opposite side. We then heard the guns and dogs - I do think that mobile phones should be banned from this sport as it does lessen the odds for the poor old Wild Boar!

Early morning start in the rain, saw what can only be described as a Chinese junk: armchair on the stern and a settee on the bow. In fact, we saw a number of caravans sitting on small barges with an outboard motor! Arrived back in Blain and decided to eat in the Auberge du Canal on the quayside - I can recommend this as a good traditional French restaurant. Spent a couple of days in Blain, used the bikes but I think we will take our bikes from home next year. Those fold up bikes are OK but the small wheels don't work very well on tow paths and my pedal fell off on one excursion.

Weather a bit iffy, raining most of the way to Guenrouet. We travelled part way in company with a small red boat with four people on board and a tarpaulin over the cockpit to keep out the rain. They were French so their mooring lines consisted of one piece of thin line and two boat hooks. If you walk up the hill into Guenrouet you will find a couple of shops but not much else, although the Church is worth a visit as it has some wonderful stained glass windows.

Left Guenrouet at 09:30 en route to Redon. This part of the canal is really beautiful, more like a river as it starts quite wide and runs through farming land. As you get nearer the lock into the river at Bellions it narrows down and is rather shallow. We had 0.4m under our keel at one point and we draw about 0.75 m.

We made good time up this stretch and were able to pass through the last lock before they shut for lunch, arriving at Redon around 13:00. Had some lunch and went shopping for presents to take home for the grandchildren - I think Jackie is missing them as they are now mentioned most days. Jackie says that I am most things to her but I obviously can't compensate for the grandchildren!

Left Redon the following lunch time for the short trip downstream to Rieux - It rained all the way. Moored up just in front of a Nicholson that turned out to be one of the original boats built and she had won the Round The Island race in her day. They are also on their way down to Foleux to lift out. We had arranged to be lifted out on the 26th August so after a pleasant couple of days in Rieux we made our way to our last port of call in Foleux and began packing things in bags as best we could. Met up with Mike and Ann Sullivan and were invited to visit them for dinner and a real bed. They have recently moved to France and seemed keen to show us their house. They drove us back to Foleux the following morning saying they would return in the morning to help us pack the things in the Van (that's another story) and take us to Redon to catch the train. What a couple of stars. I didn't really want to come home but needs must and their help made it that much easier.



Lift out - French Style

In conclusion, the Seal 28 is in my opinion an ideal affordable boat for cruising the canals - She will sleep seven at a push. We bought a fridge that sits in the wet locker and this was one of our better purchases. The Garmin 276c has the channel charts on it and also the European road maps and with the off road option on it will track your position in the canals. The Navicart booklet gave a lot of useful information although it does need updating. My thanks to the mast party: Paul, Dave, Sharon, Jono and Jacques. Also, thank you to Mike and Ann Sullivan for their help and hospitality. Finally, big thanks to Jonty for bringing the gear home and my wife Jackie for putting up with me for twelve weeks.

Colin Oiller
Hon Life Vice President

Some people think Bomber's a pain
Each year he plays round with a crane
The driver's named Drew
King Crane's only crew
But he comes back, again and again.

ESSC Battle Flags

Christine Ablett informs me that she has just finished constructing six more ESSC Battle Flags. If you would like one of the remaining five (I have got my eyes on one of them!) please send her an email (christineablett@talktalk.net) or give her a ring (01243-373549). This quality product can be yours for £25.

Go on, wear your flag with pride!

Editor.

Yvonne Watkins' Visit to Sierra Leone

Many Club members have supported a school in West Africa over the last 5 years. They have helped raise money to re build the school and help pay for resources and so it was with great enthusiasm that I returned there after 23 Years! in February.

I worked there as an English V.S.O teacher in a town called Moyamba, which is about 3 ½ hours up country from the capital city Freetown. It is a small market town about the same size as Southbourne.



Sierra Leone was devastated by a Civil war which lasted for 10 years. The legacy of the war was obvious everywhere we went, either because of the many amputees we saw, or because of the basic lack of infrastructure that still makes every day life difficult.

It was a week full of surprises, memories and more importantly, as is always the case with Sierra Leone, it made us reflect on how determined the people there are, and despite all their troubles - and there are many - the people remain motivated and want to do well.



Cited as the 2nd poorest country in the world and according to the UN, at the bottom of the League for Human development, it is a small country facing large unemployment and low life expectancy - 41 years for a man, 44 for a woman.

The School: our link is with St Joseph's Secondary Vocational School in Moyamba. It has a mixed pre-school, an all girl's primary and a secondary school with 49 boarders on the same compound. There is a boy's secondary school next door. Education is seen as being so important in Sierra Leone but it is expensive – it only costs £15.00 per year to send a child to Secondary School but for many that is completely out of reach.



Due to the one of the Millennium Goals, Primary education is free but pens, books etc all need to be purchased by the families and so many do not go for that reason, especially the girls. And yet it is the girls who we know, particularly need the education. If we can educate a girl, we educate a family.

Resources are basic – we saw a science teacher using nothing more than one text book in a science class; a class of 39 students sharing 6-7 text books in an English lesson. Of course there is no internet, very few text books but a great reliance on the enthusiasm of the teachers. At Primary level it was a similar story, very few resources were available.



But, and it is a big but, their desire to learn and to do well overwhelmed us constantly. Pupils are keen to learn and to make something of their future and they are also so pleased to have a link with us here in West Sussex. They were very welcoming and so keen to pursue our links and also very happy to know that people in England know about their town and their school.

Watch out for our next evening for Sierra Leone to find out more

Yvonne Watkins

The Pantomime 2009

On returning from 10 weeks cruising the Brittany canals, I heard a rumour that I had written a pantomime! At that point I hadn't, but 3 weeks later I had and rehearsals soon started. Sinderella was the tenuous link to 'real pantomime' but from there-on-in a sailing theme took over, sort of. Each week someone came with a new addition, ad-lib or idea which then got e-mailed to everyone until they all said 'No, nay never, no never no more'!!



A final definitive version appeared and rehearsals took off – except that I don't think we ever had a week when everyone was there, including the dress rehearsals! Sailing in Malaysia, the Caribbean, doing the 'Arc', visiting the Antipodes and Ski-ing took priority! By the first night I was beginning to wonder whether I should take off to somewhere exclusive and remote myself! But I am made of sterner stuff than that and the Friday performance made me wonder what on earth I had been worrying about. The cast rose to the occasion and by Saturday night had got it sussed!



The cast were brilliant – some people taking almost the first half to realise that 'Mother' was indeed Richard Munday, so convincing was he. While Bob Fuller and Nick Pomfret got their tongues round their Vicky Pollard/Catherine Tate characters with remarkable ease. Geoff Beale completed the dysfunctional part of the family, trying his best to support his lovely daughter Sindere (Helen Hodges) who was transformed into the glamour puss we all know her as by the most amazing Hairy Fairy Godmother you have ever seen (Jonathan Thorsby). The Chandlers was run by two long suffering stalwarts (Julia Munday and Jackie

Rea) who sussed out the saboteurs (James Mant, Mark Taylor, John Ford and Beverley Lewis) with remarkable ease and punished them accordingly. Sustenance was provided by Chef Lenny (Bryan Hodges) and 4 'trainees' (Luke and Jo Austin, Jono Watkins and Barnaby Thorsby) who also doubled as 'stand up comics' during the sometimes longer than planned scenery changes! The Internet access on the stairs I'm sure wasn't put there for the purloining of jokes but it certainly came into its own! The WOW group (Mary Alston, Jane and Viv Reed) gave a bit of glamour to the proceedings and the dancing swans who transformed themselves into Elvis (Andy Gould, Billy Mulvin, Mike Lillywhite, James Mant and Alan Power) certainly gave us the comedy! As did 'Bomber' and his 'Mast Party' rendition followed up quickly with his boltcroppers! - A familiar scene for cruiser sailors. The RYA Inspector (Julian Mandiwall) tried hard to bring a semblance of order and decorum to the proceedings - he did at least get his lines right until it was discovered that his RYA handbook actually contained the script! Trinny and Susannah (Mary Alston and Yvonne Watkins) dropped in to advise on evening wear for the dysfunctionals – a challenge to end all challenges but they all looked good in the end as MC (Mike Hackman) announced them into the ball with Toggles (Jane Edmunds) finding herself all toggged up with no-one to go with and Lenny the Chef thinking he's in with a chance after finding the lifejacket that only fits Sindere! Sindere resolves the dilemma by living up to her name and marching off with both of them. What a sinful character!

The 'stage' was transformed by amazing scenery designed and painted by Pat Haysom and Katie Cole and the lighting just had to be seen to be believed. Dave Rea and Dave Purdey (brother of Chris) spent hours, and I mean hours, getting it right so that the 'actors' could strut their stuff immaculately made up by Sandra Swain, Sarah Turner and Lesley Spencer, kitted out by Christine Ablett (who was also a very busy prompt) with props to die for made by Geoff Beale and John Ford. Derek Pullen managed to get us material for backdrops and wooden flats while the local school loaned us some staging so that those at the back could see! I'm only sorry that Dick Howell, helping us return it to the school, managed to be in the way when some of it fell over, which required a few stitches in his head! Sorry Dick.

Mike Hackman and I, on realising that the first panto was 24 YEARS ago, felt we couldn't let the occasion pass without reference and so we decided a song in which the audience could participate was called for - This got them nicely warmed up for a rendition of our now club song 'This ole Club'. At last Clive and Hazel Frost could now forget about trying to get the singers to sing 'in-tune', 'in-time' and 'in here'!

A very memorable time (as have been all the pantomimes) was had by all - A big thank you to everyone involved and to you the audiences who raised a fantastic £1000 plus for Southampton General Hospital. This will go towards their new facilities for teenagers undergoing in-patient treatment for cancer. You are all just so brilliant.

Jackie Oiller
Hon Life Vice President

A sailor from Slipper called Hugh
Woke up in a terrible stew
His wife said "Don't worry
Just ask Colin Urry
He'll tell you just what not to do!"

And Finally...

Wondering where the limericks have appeared from? Well, they were all written during the course of the 2007 Cruiser Supper as a form of "entertainment"! A number were rejected because they were completely addled (as were the authors!) and others were cast aside because some of the words used made me blush! Those that remain made me smile and I hope they also entertain you. There are more and I shall save them for next time – You have been warned!

Upon hearing that I have recently spent hundreds of pounds and many hours replacing the leaking fore-hatch and dodgy windows on Buster, Judith Murch concluded that we must be in for a long, warm and dry summer. Oh, how I hope she is right!! Happy sailing.

Martin Perry
Editor