

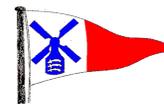
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**December**



**2008**

# IYC Newsletter



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## **Commodores Quarter Deck**

It appears that winter is now beginning to take a grip. Many of our boats are out of the water and in the compound for winter storage but some of us have left ours afloat just praying for the odd fine day when we might venture out for a sail as the summer has been so disappointing. I know that we are all praying that next spring, summer and autumn will be much kinder next year than it has been this year. If not I do not think the brokerages will be able to cope with the number of boats up for sale nor will there be enough camper vans to go around.

Some of you will be glad to know that the normally coldest cruise of the year will again take place to the Medway in February, so watch the Notice Board for details. It may be to Thunderbolt Pier again or we may go to the Medway Yacht Club if they allow us to lie on their hammer head. Of course the advantage with Thunderbolt is that there is electric there and so you can have your fan heaters on full blast, thus stopping your crew from moaning or threatening mutiny. I am sorry if this is not very green but is better than being blue (with the cold). It may sound insane cruising in what can be a very cold month but I have not missed one yet and there has not been one where I have not enjoyed thoroughly. Well there was the one where we went through 3 blizzards with horizontal snow and gale force winds on the way back but don't let that put you off. Statistically that should not happen again for a very long time but I can already hear some of you saying, 'Famous last words'.

However, don't be put off because last year we had 6 boats go and we all had a great time. So if your boat is still in the water in February then why not join us?

The Gentlemen's Cruise to St Katherine's took place in November but sadly only 3 boats made the trip. They were my boat MAX with me, Garry Terry and Bob Hough on board, Russel Blitz's WESTERN ENTERPRISE with him, Barry Bonner and Chris Coombes and Pete Kimber's boat Sheikharra with him, Steve Smitten but also 2 day trippers for the Friday, Dave Walker and a very strange bloke called Norman. The whole weekend was quieter than usual. The trip up was uneventful and we made ourselves comfortable in the Dickens for Friday afternoon, ate and drunk in Weatherspoons, called into the Anchor Tap pub on the way back to the boats for a top up and then drank copious amounts of red wine listening to Pink Floyd to round the evening off.

On Saturday we had a hearty breakfast in the Riverside Café and then took one of the river boats to Greenwich and spent the afternoon in the Maritime Museum. We then took some refreshment in the Trafalgar pub on the river by the museum before returning to the boats to rest up before going for a curry. Now all of you who know me know that I do not eat curry but once a year and only once a year I have an annual curry during the Gentlemen's cruise to be sociable as all the others love an Indian. This year there also was Russel Blitz who is not a lover of Indian. However, we all trotted off to the Bridge Tandoori on the South side of Tower Bridge and while all the others tucked into exotic dishes Russ and I made do with a mild Chicken Tika and a bottle of Cobra beer at nearly £5 a bottle. The bill came to £25 each and Russ was heard to comment "That's a bloody lot of money for a plate of rice and a pint of beer". Ah well, it's back to Burger King next year. We then walked down to Weatherspoons where the beer is good and the cost more suitable to our pockets and then made our way back to the boats. Once again we rounded the evening off by drinking copious amounts of red wine and listening to Pink Floyd.

The Sunday morning began again with a great breakfast in the Riverside Café followed by preparations to leave. We got the call from the marina office they were about to open the lock so we could slip our lines. We did this but after about 20 minutes fluffing around in the basin we were informed they could not open the inner lock gate. So we tied up again with thoughts of a free weeks stay in St Kats and a warm, speedy trip home by train but just as that was beginning to sound quite good the lock was opening and it was time to go.

As usual the trip back was long and boring on a cold, grey day except for one incident. On the south side, opposite Barking Creek we saw some older kids setting off fire works. As we came level with them they began to run along the bank. I suddenly realised what they were about. They were going to fire something at us. I increased our speed and pulled further into the middle of the river so they gave up on me but Russ was about a quarter of a mile behind me and before I could warn him they had fired a rocket at his boat and it literally burst just above his mast top. I thought "You little darlings" or something like that and felt like firing one of my flares at them, showing them what a real firework was but instead I reported it to London VTS who said they would inform the police but I heard nothing more.

Peter Kimber went straight into Holehaven and then ashore with Steve Smitten and Chris Coombes who had to be at a funeral on Monday morning while the rest of us went on to Queenborough. Arriving at about

8 pm, we managed to get on to the hammer head and went straight to the Flying Dutchman where I think we had the best meal of the weekend accompanied by the odd pint of Old Speckled Hen. The owner was very pleased to see us as because is the norm the place was empty by 9 pm. We left around 11 pm but I think we could have had a lock in as they were in no hurry for us to leave but we decided an early night would be good for us. On getting back to my boat I put the kettle on for a quick cuppa before hitting the sack. Just as the kettle was boiling there was a knock on my hull so I poked my head out of the hatch to find Russ there asking did we want to come on board for a nightcap? Well, you can guess what happened next except there was no Pink Floyd this time.

On Monday afternoon we arrived safely back at or moorings

In my last news letter I told you that the last survey report from the PLA of the dredged channel, after one year, stated that as expected there has been some silting but the degree of silting is small and is what was expected. However, I have just received the latest survey report of November which says that while there is some silting at the very start of the creek entrance to the south the remainder of the creek remains stable and shows little or no sign of silting.

With ground work for the construction of our new shower block complete, the bricks and blocks have arrived on site for the main structure but obviously the weather has not been good enough to make a start.

In all this period of doom and gloom we as a club have some good news. The grant I applied to Essex County Council for on behalf of the Club to assist in the funding of the shower block has been granted and we now have over £22,300 to complete the project.

I would specifically like to thank John Metson for all the investigation he did to find possible funding sources and our 3 East Ward Councillors Anne Wood, Lee Barret and Phil Davies for their backing and written support to the judging panel.

There was even more good news back in September. One of our cadets, Aaron Lowther, won the RYA Honda Rib Challenge at the Southampton Boat Show bringing a brand new rib and Honda outboard back to the club for his win. This is an amazing result and we are all very proud of his fantastic achievement. I will not go into all the detail as I am sure Martin Dobbs, your Rear Commodore Motor, will provide you with a far better description of that amazing day and the presentation that followed at our club on Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> November.

I would like to add that we are also very proud of all our cadets for their efforts and achievements. They are a fine testimony to themselves and to our club and long may it continue.

They say things come in threes and in the case of good news this is true. The RYA has confirmed and we have agreed that the regional final for the rib challenge in 2010 will be held here at the Island Yacht Club. Next stop Southampton again.

The AGM was a good meeting this year and with no controversial items. It went very smoothly with extremely good order from our members and I would thank all those who attended, especially on a bleak and freezing Sunday morning.

There were 2 general committee members who were standing down and one was not voted back on as a general committee member. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all three on behalf of all our members for their outstanding efforts for the club and they leave a strong legacy for the three new general committee members. Please welcome them onto your committee and give them your support.

Thanks should also go to all your Committee Members for the time and energy they put into running the club on your behalf and to those who are members of the sub committees, a very important constituent for the running of the club but a much forgotten band.

Doing my Father Christmas bit, I would like to remind you that you can purchase club regalia direct from the club as we are now keeping many items in stock from sizes small to extra large. If you require any items please see any available committee member who will be only too pleased to help you with your purchase. Dare I say Christmas is here and our regalia would make an extremely good present for some one?

**Finally may I wish you all a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year while looking forward to a much better sailing season in 2009**

**This is a great Club! The envy of most! Be part of it!**

*Good luck, good sailing, good motoring and good fishing  
and whatever you are doing on the water, be safe.*

*Bill French*  
**Commodore**

## A.G.M. 2008

The AGM on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> produced no major changes or upsets. There were 130 members attending.

All the Flag Officers and Officers remain unchanged but your General Committee are now:

Alex Ardley,  
Dave Ayres  
Colin Ebdon  
Corinda Helps-Fursse  
Chris Irving  
Sue Lucas.

Best wishes for the coming Season and a Happy new Year to all members.

Lets hope we get some better sailing weather next year.

Regards to all,

**Valerie Deane**

Vice Commodore

Editors Note :

### Membership Subscriptions

Please refer to e-mailed or Posted members personal copies of Newsletter for details of membership renewal / subscriptions.

## Treasurer's Report

Having now been Treasurer for the last ten months and been through my first AGM I am beginning to get used to the ways of the Club and its accounts. Again, Pat (the former Treasurer) has been very helpful to me throughout this time but I spend less and less time troubling her now.

Currently the Club is in a very healthy condition but we are coming up to an expensive time with our fuel bills so I will need to keep an eye on that.

Again I would encourage everyone to use the Club and its facilities as much as possible. This is the only way that we can ensure a prosperous future and will give us the ability to take on future projects for the benefit of all.

### *ICYC Social Section*

<b>Quiz night</b>	<b>13th December</b>
<b>Children Christmas party</b>	<b>14 December</b>
<b>Christmas Dance</b>	<b>20th December</b>
<b>New Years Eve Party (ticket only )</b>	
<b>CCS Prize Giving Dinner BYC</b>	<b>24 January</b>

**Please visit your club to find out what events are in store for you and your family, book your tickets early (not all events need tickets)**

## RYA RIB Challenge 2008

Five long cold winters ago a little group of IYC Cadets gathered at the club compound to try their hand at driving the club RIB. A notice had been put up for the RYA RIB challenge and Caroline wanted to have a go. I had very little idea what it was all about but had offered to help and made up some buoys out of lemonade bottles and had the RIB fuelled up ready to go. But as with so many things in life circumstances lead us into things we never expected. Six little eager faces turned sad as it became clear we had no trainer and Rodney Bye persuaded me to take them out.



On that first day we went up Benfleet Creek for some shelter and tried some manoeuvres around 6 bobbing lemonade bottles at a speed that would be embarrassingly slow for our youngest beginner today.

### **That was the start of the IYC Cadets RYA RIB Challenge.**

But by the time the regional trials came round the Cadets were flying & we thought they were terrific. A timed trial was held with Paul Soderberg & Jeff Beverley as Judges. That was their first involvement but they have become the main trainers who have helped bring the Cadets up to a championship winning standard. On that occasion Josh Turner won the Senior age group with a best run of 2 min 11 seconds, and Caroline won the juniors with a best time of 3min 10 seconds... how things have moved on, Aaron nearly broke 1 minute at the finals this year.

We came close so many times with seconds and thirds every year. Every year the standards were raised and every year the Cadets raised their game to meet the challenge. Every year we have entered cadets who could have won the challenge, but every year we got caught out by something unexpected.

We have a fantastic bunch of Cadets and every one that trained, and every one that reached the Regional Trials should feel proud as it was from the lessons we all learnt from their efforts that we are where we are now. It is from their experiences that we developed our training and it was their competition in the training sessions that helped to raise Aaron to a winning standard.

One of our biggest problems was that the Regional Race was held early in the season on a lake. Cadets from those clubs could train through the winter in the right conditions whilst our cadets were battling through waves and cold spray!! So this year we went winter training on a lake. We devised new exercises to develop boat handling and control, and a handicap system to make things really competitive, and

it was really close at the top. Andrew Dobbs and Aron Soderberg won and we were feeling very confident.

How fate played our hand this time, The course was as we expected, the weather was horrid (which suited our open water hardened cadets), and we were allowed to enter our reserves as well. In the race Andrew tried too hard and overcooked a few turns but Aaron Lowther nailed it with an Eastern Region record time and won. In the juniors Aron Soderberg was a close second to Steven Curtis (who went on to win the junior championship). On another day Aron you would have beaten him, keep practicing and I have no doubt you will soon have another chance. In Fact five of our cadets raced at the Eastern region race and they all put in good enough times to be finalists, but only the winners go through to the finals, and they both won the championship.

Then many weekends passed and Aaron practiced and practiced at every opportunity he could with Jeff and Paul for the championships at Southampton. A coach was arranged and 50 supporters ended up on the pontoons and quay side to cheer on our Cadet; no one else had so much support. He put in a cracking run, but so did some others & we had to wait for the prize giving for the result. 50 IYC supporters made up nearly half the audience as the places were read out: 3rd place was announced, not Aaron, 2<sup>nd</sup> place again not Aaron and another lad looked ready to step up when they announced the winner. From the "Island" (Cheer welling up) "Sailing" (my heart sank as did I am sure a few others at the name of that bunch from Cowes)...."Sorry Island Yacht Club". The screams and cheers from 50 IYC fans drowned out the rest of the applause, and water appeared in quite a few eyes (and I am not just talking about the girls but out of respect for their reputations they shall remain nameless, though I have to admit to being one of them). For those that were there this was a moment they will always remember.

Last weekend Aaron and Bill received the RIB that Aaron has won for the club, complete with VHF, road trailer & outboard. He then had to take everyone for a spin including the local vicar after blessing the boat.



The club is now firmly on the RYA map and they have asked us to host a RIB Challenge elimination trial for the southern section of the Eastern Region in 2009, and the actual Eastern Region RIB challenge race in 2010.

**Well Done Aaron, and well done to all the cadets  
and everyone that supported them.**

## Cadet section

Fellow Members

By the time you receive the newsletter and are reading this the Cadet group will have finished for 2008, a very successful year, and will be looking forward to 2009.

The last few months have certainly been a roller coaster, with thankfully more highs than lows, thanks to Aaron Lowther and his success at the Southampton Boat Show. With the shorter and colder days less time has been spent on the water, with more time spent doing practical lessons in the warmth of the Clubhouse.

The summer saw the Fun Day taking place, with many regular attractions including the traditional balloon race, bbq and football in the bay in the mud. The day was very well attended and all proceeds went to supporting the cadet group. Our thanks extend to all who took part in the event and all who attended, making the day what it was.

We were also visited by the Essex Yacht Club cadets who came over, filling the floating pontoon with dinghies, RIBs and tenders from the yachts who accompanied them. This was made all the more interesting by the EYC cadets and leaders being dressed up as pirates!! These visits are becoming an annual event and are looked forward to by all concerned and help strengthen our links to other foreshore clubs and cadet groups.

The last sailing events were the Canvey Supply Cup and Paul Metson Memorial Trophy, well attended and well supported by cadets and parents alike. The Canvey Supply Cup wasn't without some problems, caused by a sudden change in the weather, but the cadets were soon brought ashore and lessons were learnt by all.

The standards of the cadets have drastically increased over the last year both on and off the water, making real difficulties to decide on various prizes given out for improvement and achievement. We all hope that this happens again next year. It has also been an added help that the older cadets have been able to teach the younger cadets and pass on experiences, which has been a real help in making groups smaller and giving more one-to-one tuition.

The "traditional" year rounded off with bowling, keeping everyone happy and giving everyone a chance to relax and enjoy themselves for an evening.

From all the Cadets, Martin, Karen, Mark and myself we'd like to thank all members who have assisted in any way throughout the year and to wish all Club members A Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Very best regards

Martin, Karen, Alex & Mark

## CADET RIB TRAINING 2009

I expect after Aaron's success there will be a lot of interest this year.

We are already planning this year's training and hopefully we will be able to use the lake again. Provisional training dates will be Sat 31st January, Sat 28th February and Sat 7th February.

The RYA have decided to hold three elimination trials in the Eastern Region and the three best drivers in Junior, and three best drivers in the Senior age groups will go through to the Eastern region Race on the River Blackwater on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2009. So you don't have to be the best in the club to get through, but you have to be in the top three at the elimination trial.

Luckily for us they want to hold the elimination trial for the southern end of the Eastern Region at the IYC, so hopefully you can all have a try then. Date still to be arranged.

Also looking to the future they have asked us to host the 2010 Eastern Region Race at the IYC. So the Cadets have quite a future ahead in the RIB Challenge.

Don't assume that Aaron will win this again in 2009 as the competition in the Seniors is very close and it will all come down to who nails it on the day. As for the Juniors the fastest drivers from 2008 have moved up into the senior age group but there are some promising Junior Cadets left who are now a year older and have the ability to win the Juniors race in 2009. And please don't be put off if you are a girl, Caroline nearly won the Eastern Region race when she was 10, and she was only beaten by another girl who went on to win the final...!

As for Aaron, he has to wait and see if the RYA will be competing in the Formula Future event (which is the world championship version). This will be in Abu Dhabi December 2009, but to be picked Aaron will have to compete in a UK elimination race on a different course, in different boats, against all the RIB challenge finalists and all the Junior Powerboat Champions !! So if it goes ahead he still has a lot to do.



## Children's Fishing Comp

Sunday 13th December 2008

Muster 10.30am Club House High Tide 5.9m 12.30pm

Please put your Children's Names on Club Notice Board List

## Motor Boat Section

Firstly may I thank those of you who took part in our planned events this season with out your participation it would not have been a club event.

The weather this season as not been as good as it could have been. But as most of you are aware we did complete all of the cruises that we had planned over the Bank Holidays this season. There was some good positive feed back form all of the skippers and crews that took part in the cruises. So hopefully when we set a date for our pre-season meetings for next year. To plan our cruises you will all come along and have some input.

In the mean time with most of you out of the water for winter and carrying out maintenance work on your boats etc may I wish you well. Please and if any of you newer members are trying to find people to carry repairs etc. Or trying to track down parts please, speak with other members around the compound. They just might be able to help point you in the right direction.

I also know of some of you that will be using your boat over the winter, season so may I wish you good luck.

But if anyone would like to go off for a weekend 'or mid week cruise and would like to go in company. Please feel free to put a note up on the motor boat notice board and invite fellow club members to join you.

As the winter is now upon us with short days and long nights there is no better time to come along and support the clubs social events, as it was our social committee that hosted the first club cruise of 2008 season.

I would just like to finish by wishing all our members a merry Christmas and a happy New Year

Martin Dobbs (Rear Comm Motor)

## Children's Fishing Comp

Sunday 13th December 2008

Muster 10.30am Club House High Tide 5.9m 12.30pm

Please put your Children's Names on Club Notice Board List

## Cruiser Sailing Report 2008

Well another year is over, didn't it go by quickly. This years sailing activities got off with a slow start and some might say got slower as the "summer" or lack of progressed.

The Easter Cruise didn't happen, and the Sailing season finally got off to a start with the first race of the season, the Sunnyside Cup.

But despite the weather and tides there have been lots of occasions where members have been able to get out in their boats and enjoy them, either individually or in company with others.

### RACING

The numbers of boats taking part in the 10 cruiser races this year were encouragingly up on previous recent years. Only 2 races, the Norton Novice race and the Ladies race, were cancelled.

This year The Island Yacht Club Cruisers enjoyed particularly successful results. In the 6 CCS and Interclub races, where boats compete against other local yacht clubs. Out of the 3 classes A, B, & Multihull, FOUR Island boats clocked up between them;

One 1st overall position,

Three 2nd overall positions,

Six 1st in class positions,

& five 2nd in class positions.

Congratulations should go to Keith Gordon on Viva, John Clarke on Sapphire, Bill Mahon on Triaz, and Mike Edwards on Aztec.

The overall numbers taking part in cruiser racing this year has gone up from 11 last year, to 17 boats this year.

### CRUISING

Nine cruises happened this year, a couple were organised specifically for motor boats in mind but the majority are classed as joint motor and sail events where sailing boats and the slower motor boats can keep company, whilst the faster ones go ahead. It would be nice to see more joint cruises and joining together of these 2 sections. Again the numbers of boats taking part in organised cruises were very encouraging.

SUMMARY of this years events.

**Cruise to Hoo - up the Medway** - 3 day cruise organised by the Social Committee and attended by about 5 Motor and 1 Sailing boat. It took place in ideal conditions over the 3 days. Although the trip to Hoo is always a rush against the tide (at least for the sailing boats) it is easy to do with a medium draft boat and this year I even braved going through the inside of Hoo Island to reach the marina,

although I would not recommend this unless you know the channels well, I nearly came a cropper on some raised mud banks.

**Queenborough Race** – Organised by Benfleet Yacht Club on behalf of the CCS. Quite windy NE force 5 – 6 conditions with waves 2m high at the South Shoebury buoy. However the weather was good and all who took part enjoyed the excitement. 3 yacht clubs took part, Out of a total of 12 yachts 5 were from the Island.

**Vice Commodores Cruise – To Gravelines**, 5 sailing boats took part and made it to Ramsgate, where the weather deteriorated and prevented them crossing over to France. A great time was enjoyed in Ramsgate.

Boatacs Trophy – Race to Stangate Creek in the Medway. 5 yacht clubs took part in the race. There were 15 yachts in total, 4 of these were yachts from the Island.

**Ellen Rapkin Race** – Great conditions for a fun race around the Estuary, sunny and gentle winds. This seems to be turning into a bit of a 2 boat challenge between Intention Too and Aztec. Last year Intention Too thrashed Aztec, this year the tables were turned, how about next year, best of 3 OK John. Oh and of course others are more than welcome to join in.

**Harty Ferry Race & Cruise** – Organised by Leigh Sailing Club on behalf of the CCS. This has always been an enjoyable race for me, it favours the slower boats with the tide helping you most of the way. This year was no exception with favourable weather. 17 yachts took part from 5 Yacht Clubs, the Island had 4 entries and won 1st and 3rd overall

The Harty Ferry Inn is a great place to eat, but you need to use a dinghy to get ashore.

**South Coast Cruise** – 12 day cruise visiting Dover, Eastbourne, Brighton, and on the return Eastbourne, Rye, Dover, Ramsgate. The original plan was to sail to the Isle of Wight, where 2 boats were going to compete in the round the Island Race.

3 smaller boats set off on Monday 23 June and made it to Brighton by noon on Wednesday. Here we were going to wait for the other 4 boats who left on Tuesday to catch up, and then sail together to Chichester Harbour on the Thursday. But the weather worsened and the following 4 boats were held up in Dover. Eventually the 4 made it to Brighton on Thursday, and due to the weather this is where all 7 boats stayed for the rest of the week. On Saturday a party went by bus and Fast Ferry to Ryde and watched the Round the Island Race from different vantage points, courtesy of Dave's cousins.

On Sunday 2 boats left Brighton to return home, On Monday a further 3 boats left on the homeward journey. 1 boat who had 3 weeks to cruise stayed and left Brighton later to continue to the Isle of Wight. The remaining boat was left at Brighton whilst the crew returned home, to return a few weeks later and continue to Chichester. The 3 boats which left on Monday had a leisurely sail / motor homeward stopping at Eastbourne, Rye, Dover, & Ramsgate, finally arriving back at Canvey at lunchtime on the Friday of the 2nd week.

**Nore Race** – Organised by Benfleet Yacht Club. 6 Cruisers from the Island took part in this spectacular annual event.

Interclub Race – This year it was the Island's turn to host the committee boat. This race now incorporates the Interclub Cruiser Challenge and the Interclub Team race. Only 2 clubs entered this year. 3 boats from the Island YC took part in the race against Essex YC's 3 boats.

The Island came a very close 2nd in the team race.

Maidstone River Festival

A number of motor boats attended the festival this year.

**Blackwater Race & Cruise** – Organised by Essex Yacht Club on behalf of the CCS. 5 boats from the Island finished at the Nass Beacon in the Blackwater. 7 out of the 18 yachts that took part, from the usual 5 different clubs, were from the Island, a good turn out for us. A further 2 boats joined the race fleet in Bradwell Marina, where some had a BBQ and others ate in the Green Man. We all met for drinks at the Cruising Club and took part in a crazy balloon shape making competition organised by the DJ, Timbo.

**Queenborough Cruise** – Spontaneous mini cruise - 6 boats met up and enjoyed a nice meal in company in the Flying Duchman.

Commodores Cruise – This year was to Ramsgate. 4 Motor Boats and 4 Sailing Boats took part.

A great days sail all the way to Ramsgate with excellent following winds and good weather on the way there. Nice company, nice meal. An interesting and bumpy motor sail back to Canvey.

**Koningstein Cup Pursuit Race** – 15 Dinghies of all types from Laser to Tornado and 3 Cruisers all started at different times designed so that everyone should finish at the same time. This must have been the shortest race ever, as it was finished at the Chapman buoy due to very light winds. Then of course after the race the winds picked up to a nice force 3.

**Upnor Race** - Organised by Island Yacht Club on behalf of the CCS.

The race started slowly, 23 boats drifted over the start line – and it got slower. As we rounded the W Shoebury, it became obvious that although we were heading for the Medway No5 buoy we were in fact making a course towards the Wind farm or even Ramsgate. An hour and a half after the race we had barely covered 4 miles. Everyone was in the same situation, some had made it over to the Nore sands where they decided to wait for the wind to pick up by dropping anchor to hold their position. Most of the fleet had more or less decided that they were going to retire, we were just waiting for the first boat to give up. Finally I saw the sails come down on a boat so at about 3:00pm I started my engine and headed for Upnor. 5 boats slugged it out and continued under racing rules but unfortunately did not make it to the finish line before the time limit was reached.

A free buffet courtesy of the CCS Race committee was laid on, and everybody seemed to enjoy themselves in the comfortable surroundings at the Medway Yacht Club.

**Green King Race** – A good number of Cruisers started the last race of the sailing season (at least for the Cruisers) The wind was barely blowing 3 kn and it was a very slow start. Eventually the wind slowly increased and eventually we were sailing. Normally this race takes about 80 minutes this year it took 120 minutes. Only 3 cruisers finally made it round to the finish.

#### **Gentlemans Cruise – To St. Katherines**

2 Sailing boats and 1 motor boat went this year. More new on this cruise in the Commodores section.

#### **SUMMARY**

So to sum up this year, the weather has been challenging, the tides seem to have been a little lower, but it has not been a complete washout. Overall I have managed to spend 26 days on the water, clocking up 645 miles whilst pottering, cruising and competing against others, either in my own boat Aztec or occasionally as crew on friend's boats.

So don't be disheartened and sell up to move to the Med, enjoy the challenge of the weather and tides, make the effort, and plan for the unexpected, it is what sailing and boating on the East Coast is all about.

Personally I get bored with hot hot hot all the time, and I still love the distinct changes we have in the seasons, and the unpredictability of the weather. After all you need an excuse not to go sailing and catch up with jobs at home, don't you, or use the time to plan your next sailing trip -:-)

There is lots going on at your club, come and join in.

I hope the numbers of boats taking part in Cruising and Racing, continues to rise next year and you all support the efforts and time your sailing committee put in to keep the organised racing and cruising club activities going.

If anybody has plans for next year and wants crew or other boats to sail in company please make use of the special web page designed for this. It can be found at;

[http://www.islandyachtclub.co.uk/sailing\\_information/sailingactivitiesweb.htm](http://www.islandyachtclub.co.uk/sailing_information/sailingactivitiesweb.htm)

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Mike Edwards

Sailing Secretary

## Down on the waterfront...

Autumn came, initially, without any real change...it was mostly grey and strangely like the height of summer during August. Does anyone remember those hot days at the end of July? Ah-! You were making good time up the Swin, or Wallet for that matter, while sparkling droplets of spray thrown up by your boats passage fell in a dazzling myriad of colours against a heart warming sun. A sun that shone down from a largely blue sky with a sprinkling of fluffy clouds that broke an otherwise constant glare and reflected from the estuary surface in ever changing hues. A memory – yes, but one of many: grey summers are not normal. And, surely, memories are made of far better stuff.

There was a day in late September, well - two in fact that stood out – though there were many others too, when a larger than usual number of boats were seen out on the water. One, a weekend race, and cruise for motor boaters and sailors, to Upnor. A mass of white sails clouded the skyline, then a colourful spectacle ensued as spinnakers rose gently in the light breeze – they were off. Others just sailed here and there, motor cruisers and speed boats buzzed about, all enjoying themselves – yachting in their own particular way. The sun shone, mistily perhaps, but it was warm and very pleasant. From some the cry for just a little more wind could almost be discerned, but the important thing was they were out there doing it. And yet, our own moorings were still filled with static...lonely...boats. It was a sad, sad sight indeed.

*Lily* went back into the water after some modifications and the installation of a pump. She has been seen, once more, ploughing her lonely furrow. An additional volunteer, it is understood, has come forward to help, but the Admiral Needs You! It takes two to tango and *Lily's* needs are not dissimilar!

While on about *Lily* it was heard that a member, known as 'Number One', came to grief during a tour of the creek. A miscalculation of speed of advance, tide, side wind and the drag from astern...fortunately not too much damage was done. It is understood he was mortified.

Some bystanders, from the comfort of their cockpits, have been known to gesticulate whilst shouting, "Come closer - come closer." It's easier said than done: job is not as easy as it appears (having tried it too), hence, possibly, the lack of volunteers and advice aplenty!

Number One, it is understood, still has the confidence of the Admiral though...and of the owner of the boat too, it should be added. So come on, step forward.

Early in October a fleet of Topper dinghies, on hire from the Royal Yachting Association pool, arrived at the club. Soon, as the tide started to make over the flats beyond our enviable clubhouse the snazzy, colourful, sails were rigged by a gaggle of wet suited cadets (with help from various adults). The sails flapped urgently in the keen breeze as cadets raced about and gobbled hastily at lunches provided by an ever present parent. Grand stuff! We're a Yacht Club – it's what it's all about. (Unfortunately, the efforts of all involved could not control the elements and only a short sail was possible on the Sunday only.) All of those involved should be applauded.

“What were you all doing?” was a question heard recently, wandering towards the club, after a Saturday spent amongst fellow yachtsmen along the waterfront.

“Oh, I was filling barrows full of rubble and tipping them along the bank side consolidation area,” a person responded.

“Oh yes,” stuttered the questioner, visibly looking skywards, seeming to thank his lucky stars for avoiding that...

The club grounds are what we make of them. And ‘a well done’ too, to all that helped out on the ‘work day’ – especially for clearing the brambles from the creek side dinghy pound - all part and parcel of our yachting scene.

Sadly, unwarranted damage to the compound tea hut was experienced recently... A group of youngsters had used it on a Sunday afternoon. Fine, but unfortunately they didn't, or don't, have much respect for your club property. Those persons, probably, are our future. Frightening isn't it?

It was a weekday, a Tuesday, the breeze was light, but the forecast had promised more. It came with the tide. One boat - it had tan sails - had crept out against the flood; then another; and another boat had followed in its wake, a mix of sail and power. A watcher was heard to say, “I should be out there too...”

“Yes...perhaps you're right,” remarked another, “we've had some splendid weather, for autumn, of late too.”

Aha, come on fellow ‘yachtsmen’, did you make use of any of those days?

*Water Rat*

## Milton Creek Revisited

The summer for many including ourselves had been one of too many days with a high grey cloud cover. That cloud cover though, had at times, lulled us into a false sense of security: we had got burnt on several occasions. The safety officer, Christobel, my enduring mate, lulled into a false sense of security hadn't insisted on smothering us both with sun block... With the cloud stronger winds had dogged us too and they had necessitated a reef in the mainsail on more occasions than I had ever logged before. The summer though had included visits to regular ports of call, places that we had not been to before and others that we'd not poked the boats bow into for many a year. We had made the most of it.



**Illustration 1:** In fine weather, *Whimbrel* nears the entrance to Oare Creek, when sailing up to Faversham during July 2008.

Towards the end of August we'd departed from Faversham on just another of those grey days. We'd both felt that it hadn't been such a bubbly visit. I think that we were, in spirit, looking forward to our home ashore - probably all due to the weather. A small group from the club had been expected too...we'd made the effort to be there...again, but they hadn't appeared. The

mate had said, “We shouldn't bother...should just do our own thing.”

“It's usually best,” I'd said, reluctantly and sighing deeply: we'd only met a mere two club boats all summer.

Queenborough had been our planned destination as we'd left with an hour or so of tide to run. The breeze, that morning, a south-westerly, had allowed for a sailing departure. It had to be done. Glancing shoreward, the mate had noticed some bystanders and quay side loafers looking smugly our way. “We're being watched,” she'd said. As always, without any qualms, the boat had responded as was always expected. Later below the Inn by Oare Creek a brief two minute spell of engine had been needed to get round a wide bend, which came back on itself, which had an expanse of mud on its inner side. An attempt at tacking had been attempted...but it had been a struggle against the tide. The boat had caressed the mud twice – the mate had passed one of those looks – a third time, near the top of the tide, might have been foolish!

Rounding the marsh edge (east of the creeks spit cardinal buoy) immediately under the seawall with two metres of water under us and coming hard on the wind we'd cleared Faversham Creek. A group of astonished bird watchers had gazed agog, wondering what the heck we'd been up to – an inbound yachtsman had looked on in horror too! The mate lifted a hand in a nonchalant wave while the skipper had concentrated on sailing, he'd only grinned: knowing the depth of marsh edges is useful knowledge and can save time and tide.

Sailing hard on the wind, inside the line off moorings of the old ferry hard, we'd reached westwards through the Swale. That reach took us well past the number two red can buoy, where the Fowley channel is still wide and deep. We had then tacked westwards: the breeze

was strong enough and we made good progress. Around number eight buoy, with the tide then hard against us and the shallower edges searching for the centre plate, the engine was run and I'd said, "Let's anchor off the Lillies (Elmley) for the night – it'll be quiet with no wind over tide bouncing us about..." After an enquiring look from the mate, I'd added, "I'd like to potter up into Milton Creek on the morrow." Our last visit had been when Alexander, our son (Alex the Moorings Man), had been a little boy of nine or ten...

On the next morning, after a tranquil night, and less wind, we'd hauled our anchor some two hours after low water and started on our potter up Milton Creek under power. The creek, which had been marked by withies with red and green floats, by the Sittingbourne Yacht Club, ran more or less centrally between the mud and marsh of the nicely dished creek. Those markers were found to run up to a wharf at Murston, the home of the club.

At first the creek had appeared empty...yet by peering closely at the marsh edges, near the entrance to starboard, I'd seen the remains of an extensive wharf near the paper mills. Within a swathe marsh lay a sunken fleet of spritsail barges, their stems and mast cases poking above the cord grass and sea pusallane. It had felt eerie. I'd shivered: the souls of those vessels affected me. At the time closing my eyes, briefly, my imagination had seen those old sailormen gliding out, from the wharves, loaded down with cement or bricks, with a barge or two creeping in loaded down to their scuppers with rubbish from the London metropolis.

The mate had been at the helm from the anchorage and I'd left her to it as I'd danced around the cabin top taking photographs. The mate's voice often heard, but generally unheeded, had pleaded for the skipper to stop blocking her line of sight, but he was far more interested in what they were passing. Beyond the mud and marsh fringed edges with its abundant wonderful birdlife, industry abounded. One wharf passed looked as if it had only recently stopped being used. It had in fact had the look of immediate readiness – "what a crying shame" I'd thought: it was apparent that the industry now looked inwards, away from the water, ignoring the transportation possibilities.



**Illustration 2:** On the way out, looking out past the 'Lillies' a mud and marsh island delta under the bottom of Elmley Island (Way out to port past the marsh ahead of the forestay – clear water seen is shallow).

Everything had looked to be asleep. It was a time capsule...slowly rotting away... merging with nature. This had been brought home as we'd passed a wharf front, its posts and gnarled rotting wooden front covered in a slimy film of

mud and dripping mossy weed. With other plant life the remnants had seemed to be an integral part of the marsh edge. Yet it wasn't. Up a side shoot from the wharf the bow planks of a vessel had been seen, a spritsail barge, lying in the dock into which she'd come many years before. She was now all but entombed in marsh, her rudder head, mast case and stem letting the world know of her existence. Across the marsh and a low seawall, amongst a stand of trees, was the squat tower of Milton Regis church: there in that village would have lived some of the army of brick, cement and wharf workers who would have known

this creek intimately, a mere two or three generations ago. Murston on the opposite bank was its twin. The two villages, during the Victorian and Edwardian eras, were once industrious and prosperous places.

Round a shallow curve the floating pontoon of the Sittingbourne Yacht Club at Murston Wharf came into view. It had sat up on the mud above the tide line at the time. Up on high ground was a house, an old public house, its garden a dash of colour where it tumbled over an embankment, was passed just down stream. "This is where the public can access the creek," I'd called to the mate, dancing around the cabin top like a demented clown. "It's the only place too." The road that led to that wharf led to the Sittingbourne club's fenced facilities and its spacious and sound part of the same wharf. Above it was a very wide concrete slipway, the remnant of a barge and coaster repair yard and in excellent condition, ran out across the mud and into the water. What a facility.

**Illustration 3:** Murston Wharf and the landing pontoon for the Sittingbourne Yacht Club.



That lack of access to the shore had been the cause for the creek being ignored by the countless vessels that have plied the waters past its entrance. A place to moor and get ashore would, in all probability, for some, change that. Kent County Council, in their infinite wisdom, wishes to put a low level bridge across the creek. It would run across above the entrance and below Murston wharf, killing at a stroke any possibility of anyone navigating the waterway. At a recent inquiry all sorts of reasons for putting the bridge across were put forward (by the Council et al). The removal of the presence of boats and prevention of disturbance to wild life was one! However, sailing boats, especially, are well known to not cause any such harmful disturbance...this wouldn't be allowed in Holland! It sounded like a load of poppy cock. Fie!

Nearing the headwaters of the creek we'd briefly touched on some shingle by an outfall, here we'd scraped over as we'd continued on our way some moments later. Up here the Swale Borough Council, we'd discovered, were planning to set up a country park on ground that borders the creek. "Don't hold your breath," I'd thought, "they'll be no thought to visitors from the water."



**Illustration 4:** Looking back at the remains of the spritsail barge *Nellie Parker* near the head of Milton Creek.

Near the head of the creek we'd passed the sad sight of the *Nellie Parker*, a spritsail barge, originally built (1899) for and owned by the Parker family of Bradwell, sat forlornly in a patch of marsh that had until recent times been within the creek proper, her hull shattered and broken from the ravages of a hard trading life

and age. To port, a fork led up to the Dolphin Yard, a museum of barging and barge building. Part of the land on which this place sat had been reclaimed by a developer who had tried unsuccessfully to eject the museum. An ancient log pond had been filled in by the land developers and the way up to the yard now traverses the top of a set of barge blocks. The creek had all but been filled over and destroyed. Up the head of the creek sat a barge, the *Celtic*, a big steel barge of 120nrt built in Holland in 1903, one of a class of twelve large coasters, her fate now delicate. To starboard the creek narrowed as it ran up to Crown Quay – right into the heart of Sittingbourne – with no where to land!

Seeing a piece of debris in the creek bed, we'd gone no further (this is in fact mentioned on the Sittingbourne yacht club web site). The mud banks though were amazingly clear of debris: this is the result of clear up sessions carried out by volunteers, mainly from the yacht club. General rubbish in fact, we'd noticed, was at a lower level than in our own creek! Setting the jib we'd nosed *Whimbrel's* bow up through the gentle breeze and into the mud edge to allow the tide to take her stern round. Then as the breeze had flicked at the jib and the engine had been silenced the boat was sailing. It was a delightful sail back out. The mate now relieved from her post at the helm then had had time to look about her and take in some of the panorama and her skipper's burbles.

**Illustration 5:** Looking up the last reach before the approach to Crown Quay is made beyond the next bend (The turning point).



Sailing back past the yacht club we'd noticed that the pontoon had been well afloat, enough for us to have berthed – some two hours before high water too. Approaching the last reach we'd set the mainsail before shooting back out into the Swale as the spritsail barge *Greta* had gone past, with an astonished gaggle of passengers. We followed in the barge's wake towards the bridge. The mate, who had been listening to her skipper's rambles, for the past hour or so, had said, "I don't suppose any of that lot," pointing to the charter party, "know of the history within this creek."

"I doubt it," I'd said, "They'll be the same as the lot I met on the *Repertor* a few seasons ago in Stangate – none of that charter party knew about the brickfields and barges that worked from the creeks thereabouts. The barge, her sisters and what it had been all about were of little consequence."

"I'd found that sad at the time: here too is a creek that remains full of historical interest."

The mate had grinned, saying, "but really...there's nothing there..." for she had not seen a lot!

"Nothing there," I'd retorted, indignantly, "it was all around you!"

Nick Ardley (*Whimbrel*)

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