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National Chairman

REPORT TO AWCC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE at STRAWBERRY ISLAND
 Nov 15th 2014

I must open this report by recording my sadness over the passing of John Stevenson, for although I did not know him well as our time with AWCC did not coincide, John was such an important figure in AWCC South and West Region. A loyal servant to the AWCC and Founder Member of Thrupp Canal Cruising Club, we have lost another person who influenced the early days AWCC and Inland Waterway cruising.

I was away for much of the time since our last meeting but did attend a meeting at CRT along with other boating groups namely, IWA, NABO, RBOA & ACC, to discuss the meaning of Bone-Fide navigation in general and as applied to Continuous Cruising in particular. The problem being one of definition, as we know that Bone Fide Navigation was deemed not to be shuffling between one place and another nearby place during the court case of Brown V CRT on 19 Feb 2014 however, the court was unable to define what might be deemed acceptable navigation.

The meeting was unable to agree a definition as opinions on what is acceptable varied widely. IWA and AWCC were in broad agreement that an ongoing journey might consist of an annual mileage of say five hundred with a minimum monthly of fifty to be considered along with an enforced limit on returns. There was a view from other attendees that suggested a far smaller pattern of movement. I made the point that we need to agree the fundamental aims of enforcement and definitions before suggesting any distances or non-return policies.

NATIONAL CHAIRMAN

We need to encourage boat movement, reduce the amount of on-line mooring, stop the tendency for movement to and from closely located mooring sites and produce set of mooring rules that are perceived as fair by all. CRT agreed to draft a paper in readiness for a follow up meeting in January.

Policies associated with navigation and enforcement will need to be fully compliant with the Acts as there will almost certainly be further legal challenges ahead.

CRT has appointed a Welfare Officer, Sean Williams for an initial two year posting to continue the work of the now largely unfunded Waterways Chaplaincy. There have been several cases in recent years of boaters, largely from the group of those who have chosen to make the waterways their home, of serious health, financial and welfare problems. Of particular concern is the aging population of boaters and those, for whatever reason are incapable of self help with no support network.

I briefly met Sean following the above meeting and received a follow-up mail two days ago requesting a meeting for a general discussion on waterways in today's world from the AWCC viewpoint. CRT accepts that, whilst it is not a welfare organisation, it's charitable aims and overall responsibility for all waterway users, coupled with the success of the Waterways Chaplaincy, make this venture worthwhile.

Dean Davis, currently Acting Head of Customer Relations at CRT is leaving the post in the New Year for a new, national, department for Works and Construction. Dean was very helpful in providing CRT support for the rally at Black Buoy and I sure we all wish him well in his new post. It appears that CRT are considering looking for an external replacement to head up Customer Relations.

The Enforcement Programme for CRT Waterways is proving successful with the national average for license evasion currently approximately 4% although some regions are rather lower. CRT is recruiting additional Checkers for those areas where the evasion rate is higher than average. New hand held terminals that incorporate GPS Position Finding will provide additional, live data-base information. CRT believe 4% evasion is probably a realistic figure before moving into the realms of diminishing returns. There is a hard core of offenders that the Trust will be targeting in the coming year

I would like to congratulate all who made the Anniversary Rally a financial success. To return a profit from an event that offered so much free entertainment and low cost facilities is true testament to those who worked so hard before and during the event.

Best wishes,

Paul

NATIONAL CHAIRMAN

REGIONAL REPORTS

South & West Region

We held our last Regional Meeting at Bradford on Avon last month, three clubs did not attend unfortunately. There has been no Canal User Forum since the Spring but I will be attending the next one at the end of this month. I announced the National Subs and we all agreed to keep Regional Subs at the same level.

Thrupp CCC reported that signage in their area has been agreed with CRT and is now in place. Thrupp is on the SE Boaters sub-committee involved in this matter. A revised planning application has been submitted for the Banbury development as the original plan did not take into account the needs of boaters. This has now been re-thought with significant input from the AWCC which shows significant canalised improvements. Their moorings have been busy over the summer months with a significant number of visiting boats being accommodated. Winter mooring arrangements are being put in place for 2014/2015 as normal. They have been in discussion with CRT with regards to adopting a local lock and part of the towpath.

Canal Taverners CC have had a couple of meetings cancelled and only 2 boats attended the gathering at Bristol – they usually have quite a good number attend.

Cotswold CCC have been cruising far and wide again.

Pewsey Wharf BC have had a varied social programme but only a couple of boats have been very far away from home.

One Club is hoping to erect a loan bike shed. Bikes could be loaned free – but a donation in the charity box would be accepted. We all thought this was a very good idea.

There is a lot of work being carried out on the Long Pound (between Devizes and Wootton Rivers) reinstating banks that have been collapsing over the past few years. Unfortunately I cannot see that it will give us more places to moor but the fishermen will like them.

No news to date regarding the space vacated by the Hairdressing boat at Bradford on Avon although Susie Mercer has agreed to discuss applications with the LWP before a decision is made.

We are hoping to arrange a Regional get together next year, possibly involving a trip on one of the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust's trips boats and lunch.

Although we thought rubbish facilities were to be reinstated at both Hungerford and Devizes nothing has happened to date. Several rubbish facilities on the canal have had notices on them saying they will be locked in future but the date for the work has come and gone with nothing being done.

I am very pleased to be able to announce that Brian Green from Thrupp Canal Cruising Club has agreed to become President of our Region. He is unlikely to be able to attend an NEC in the near future but he hopes to attend the AGM, as he normally does,

David and his wife, Maureen, and I attended the funeral of John Stevenson. John was a founding member of Thrupp Canal Cruising Club and long serving member of the S&W Region. So it is very apt that a member of that Club will become our President.

I attended the second annual presentation by the Kennet and Avon Waterway Partnership in Bath this week. Although headed "Ten Year Strategic Plan 2014" (available on CRT web site) the Three Year Action Plan was also announced.

Pauline King

REGIONAL REPORTS

North-East Region

We held our last N.E. Region meeting at Retford & Worksop Boat Club on September 17th. following the NEC Burghfield Island meeting. 10 of the region's clubs were represented, with apologies from 4 additional clubs and from the treasurer. Yet again no report or apology from the largest club in the region - Ripon Motor Boat Club.

Jean had been in touch with the newly-formed Rotsea Carr BC on the Driffeld Navigation, which had been set up following the demise of Bethells Bridge BC earlier in the year. Sadly we now have news that this fledgling club has taken a decision against applying to join AWCC for the time being.

I reported to the meeting on NEC decisions taken the previous Saturday, specifically concerning 2015 Club Subscription levels, and the Chairman's intention to open further dialogue with CRT on the subjects of rationalising leases, and safeguarding of the license agency / commission arrangements.

We then asked the Treasurer to issue 2015 subscription invoices in November so as to hopefully get the cash in earlier than in previous years.

Despite several earlier requests for clubs in the region to advise if they hold licensing agencies, we have had responses from only 2 or 3 clubs. I shall try again at next Wednesday's Regional meeting, to find out which clubs benefit from the arrangement. Likewise we asked some time ago for feedback on alterations to club details for inclusion in the 2015 Handbook - with no response so far. Again I shall stress the need for accurate information, at Wednesday's meeting. WE are still trying to collate numbers of the 2015 Handbook required within the Region.

Jean had been trying for over 2 years to contact Sheffield & Rotherham Canal Association, using their website address and e-mail & telephone contacts previously published in AWCC Handbooks. As there had been no response whatsoever, we decided to omit them from the current Handbook, as there had been no response to the subscription invoice sent last year.

David Butcher has now re-established a contact via a lady attending the recent RYA meeting in Stafford, and after Jean e-mailed again, we have a response this week from the Secretary of the Association who is promising to get back to us in the next week or - hopefully we can recruit them back into AWCC!

As I reported in September, I would not be able to attend the Autumn Customer Forum for N.E. Waterway, which was held in the middle of half-term week when family commitments prevented me from going. In the event, a couple of N.E.Region clubs were present and I hope to have further reports from them when we meet next week, supplementing the questions and answers paper which I have obtained.

A lengthy list of Winter works was published, which includes replacement of up to 48 of the Region's very old and difficult lock gates. In particular, £50,000 has been set aside for repairs and improvements to Fall Ing Lock in Wakefield, which has been the subject of hundreds of complaints over many years. We have a detailed list from Jon Horsfall, N.E Waterway Manager, of the improvements which will be carried out at Fall Ing in the next few weeks.

REGIONAL REPORTS

NE REGION CON'T

It is to be hoped that the promised improvement in finances for repairs and maintenance work will lead to a better cruising experience next year for boaters using our waterways. We have met several this year whilst out cruising, who were of the opinion that they would not have visited the N.E. Region had they realised what hard work they were letting themselves in for.

Jean & I shall attend the Second annual presentation by the N.E. Waterway Partnership, to be held in Leeds on November 27th.

Garth Robinson

London Region

London Canals Waterways Forum

Jon Guest reported that fund raising was doing well, and there are many more community adoptions now 65 in total.

Canal & river Trust are to establish welcome stations at Little Venice, Hanwell and Hatton.

The Heritage Lottery Fund have pledged 600,000 pounds towards the cost of the restoration works on Carpenters Road Lock Bow Back Rivers.

London Region Staff are now to use smart phones to improve contact with the office, Their time sheets will also be submitted in this way.

C&RT are Gaining much more income from film companies for the hire of canal side locations Disney are filming at Gloucester Docks. The income from filming was 120k

License evasion has reduced to approximately 8% this might be due to the use of online checkers. How ever there are 60 unidentified boats in our region.

In the past six months continuous cruising boats have increased by 194 this brings the total to the colossal 1052 boats. out of 3158 boat in and around London.

A new enforcement supervisor Simon Cadek is to lead the London Team this will help combat our various mooring problems.

Sam Thomas is to become customer operations manager

Sorwar Ahmed will continue his good work in controlling towpath moorings.

Trevor Gillam

REGIONAL REPORTS

Midlands

Midlands meeting on 4 October was deferred by two weeks due to a last-minute family commitment for Erica, mean that some Reps who would otherwise have attended, were unavailable. Nevertheless, 24 of the 27 clubs either attended or sent apologies.

Ian and Graham both reported on the rally, which was much enjoyed by all Midlands boaters who attended. It was noted that the website did not include information for non-boaters attending. It was pleasing to see a profit had been made.

Midlands welcomed Ian Palmer, a newly appointed Rep for Ashby Canal Association, this being the first time we have had a presence for many years. Ian took an active part in the meeting, and will be an asset to Midlands.

Erica reminded Reps to update the information for the database. A copy of each club's entry has been emailed to them, and information coming in to Erica has been good; she expects to update to Brian before the November meeting.

Graham's recommendation not to levy a Regional sub for 2015 was welcomed. Midlands income is topped up by a raffle at each meeting with prizes donated by Reps attending.

Attendance at User Group meeting was discussed, concern raised that very few clubs attend these meetings, so boaters are in the minority. This is not good for boating interests, and clubs are urged to attend whenever possible. There seems to be an increasing tendency towards apathy, with many boat club members not interested in participating, merely wanting a mooring. There is a seminar planned for next March to discuss how to engage the younger boaters in their 20s and 30s. The seminar is organised by the Worcester, Birmingham and Droitwich CA in conjunction with CRT's active support, to be held at The Bond, Birmingham on 21 March 2015. It is free and all are welcome.

Others matters of concern included SSSIs, where Natural England have intervened. There are many SSSIs on/near canals but they are often unmarked. However, there remains a statutory requirement to maintain navigation. There is also concern about canoes being allowed in tunnels, which is being investigated by CRT. Midlands clubs have noticed a difference in the way different canals are handled. It is suspected that firms use sub-contractors, and that supervision is not always as it should be.

The change of heart by HS2 regarding the route in the Fradley area was welcomed, and thanks noted for those involved, including AWCC's representative on the joint committee, Des Barnard. Other aspects of the route were discussed.

REGIONAL REPORTS

MIDLAND REGION CONT

It has been Midlands practice to have a meal after Regional meetings, although they always end before lunch time. However, the number of clubs which can offer this has reduced, so it was agreed that the host club need not be under any pressure to cater, other than tea and coffee. In this way, we hope to visit a wider range of clubs in the Region.

The recall notice from Calor re 'light' bottles was stressed, including that this may affect caravans or motorhomes, not only boaters.

Midlands does not meet during the summer, relying on electronic communication, which works well, with all Reps and Officers being connected, no matter where they may be, with Erica often receiving emails from abroad.

Ian Wood

North West

Vegetation Control

In July whilst travelling along the Staffs & Worcs Canal we witnessed the effects of cutting 4 – 6ft high vegetation, a good proportion found its way into the canal. Photographs were taken and the issue escalated via National Chairman to Vince Moran (CRT). The following response was received:-

Vegetation entering the canal

Extract from NVES contract - 3.5 General Guidance

Once the cutting operation is complete the Contractor shall tidy up the work area. grass cuttings and other arising's laying on the towpaths, footpaths, moored craft, service duct covers, drains, access covers, car parks or any other hard surface, walls, fences, furniture, or in herbaceous beds are to be swept up or air blown on to adjoining grass areas. The Contractor is to use suitable methods to ensure that as reasonably practicable cut vegetation does not enter the watercourse or be deposited on third party property including moored craft

'We've spoken to the Contractor's supervisor who undertook this work & they advised that the normal process is to go back at the end of length/stretch & clear any vegetation from the canal, inevitably there is a time lag between the cutting & clearing operation, as it could be at the end of the working day. This approach has always been taken & would appear to be reasonable as preventing all vegetation from entering the canal (especially when fringe growth is excessive) is impracticable. Clearly, if Fountains were not to go back & clear any vegetation this would be a defect under the contract, no defects have been raised on this section, so we can only assume the Contractor has returned to tidy (unless we can show otherwise)'.

Reeds on the T&M

CRT has carried our work to reduce reeds on the T&M from Middlewich to Preston Brook. There has been an improvement in the width of navigable channel and visibility at bends and very little cut reeds fell into the canal.

REGIONAL REPORTS

Llangollen Canal – Wrenbury Marina

There is a proposal to build a 200 berth marina on the fields near to the church. The planning application for the marina at Wrenbury was rejected on 19th September by the Cheshire East Strategic Planning Committee. The reason given was the detrimental effect on the village. <http://www.savewrenbury.co.uk>

Winsford Regatta 19th – 21st September

This event was very successful with 28 boats attending (20 boats from Broken Cross BC). Winsford council did a considerable amount to prepare the ‘marina site’. Mooring was difficult and security was a concern. I believe there are plans to dredge the marina for next year’s event.

Huddersfield Narrow Canal

Another boat sank in Lock 23W, it is thought it was caused by boater error. The boat which sank several weeks ago is still underwater sited below Lock 22W

Lathome Marine Cruising Association

The club sadly decided, at their AGM in October, to disband after 40 years. The same few people that have been keeping the club going for some time now will no doubt continue to meet informally, without the work!! This reduces the membership of NW Region to 18 clubs.

River Weaver – Sutton Bridge

Seven narrow boats attended the re-opening of the bridge on 7th October following its restoration.

The fixed bridge has now been removed making the River Weaver fully open for large craft.

Lancaster Canal Visitor Moorings

In response to complaints about the lack of available moorings at the most popular destinations, a trail this summer of 48 hour moorings at Billsborrow, Garstang, Galgate, Lancaster, Hest Bank, Carnforth and Tewitfield was introduced. This has led to the introduction of a number of seven day moorings at each of these sites (about a quarter of all available) to improve choice and flexibility.

Anderton Visitor Moorings

There appears to be 2 trade boats using the 24 hour visitor moorings near the lift for commercial purposes. One boat is a Fudge Boat and the other a Cafe type operator.

The boats tend to occupy the moorings for the whole weekend on a regular basis. This issue has been escalated to the M&P User Forum.

Unpowered Craft in Tunnels

The Boater’s Update issued on 24th October mentions unpowered craft allowed in tunnels.

It specifically lists Barnton & Saltersford tunnels on the Trent & Mersey Canal as suitable tunnels for unpowered craft. The construction and line of the tunnels prevent a clear view from one end to the other and therefore I feel that these tunnels are not suitable for unpowered craft. This would be an unsafe practice. Issue raised at the M&P User Forum.

Bryan Pollard

REGIONAL REPORTS

SOUTH EAST REGION

PRESIDENT SE REGION. Ralph Sullivan has been voted in as the President for SE Region.

ALERT. Link has been circulated to SE clubs via reps. and secretaries. Disappointed that SE report had not been included. A plea has been sent to clubs asking for news and photos for future editions.

NEW MARINA FOR RIVER NENE. Plans for a new marina have been passed for construction of a new marina at White Mills, Earls Barton. Work should begin in 2015 after gravel has been extracted from the site.

BCE. (Boaters Christian Fellowship). Club numbers were reported as being down to 659 members with boats down by 28. The increase of membership to £25 is believed to have had an effect. Peter Braybrook, Club secretary and rep. wanted to make it clear to AWCC member clubs that the Club can offer reciprocal moorings around the country and these can be booked through Peter contact (details in the Handbook). He has a list of available moorings. Paul has said that he wants to look further into the case of St. Pancras who want to charge clubs without a base.

OUNDLER CRUISING CLUB. Oundle Cruising Club has started to make plans for their 50th. birthday celebrations next August.

SE USER GROUP FORUM. A very positive picture was painted with maintenance work on track. There has been a wall collapse at one of the Napton Locks on the Oxford Canal and CRT were congratulated on keeping boats moving on this busy canal after putting in emergency repairs. A permanent repair will be carried out during winter stoppages. After a lift bridge collapse on the same canal all lift bridges will undergo a survey.

Moorings. Winter permits will be available one to five months. Some changes had been made to Visitor Moorings.

Enforcement. This is still good in the SE with only 1.9% of boats failing to buy a licence. Action is being taken against boaters who have no identification name or numbers.

Volunteering. Targets have been exceeded.

The floor was asked what they would like to see from CRT with the responses, improved communications, dealing with speeding cyclists, overflowing litter bins and out of date information on noticeboards.

Ralph & Jenny Sullivan

ALERT EDITOR

Calling all boat clubs!

ITEMS FOR A BUMPER ANNIVERSARY EDITION WANTED NOW.

We plan to produce a special edition of ALERT to celebrate the end of our 50th anniversary year. This will be published just before the AGM in March so please start putting your articles together NOW!

We need articles on special club events and cruises, fund raisers everything in fact that will let people know what it is all about being a member of an AWCC boat club and in particular YOUR boat club.

Have you had an adventurous club trip or a big effort by the members to improve your club, then lets us know.

Dig out those pictures from your camera or computer and send them along with the article, Word or Pages format for text and Jpeg for pictures is fine, I will arrange it all on the page.

The deadline is 25th February 2015 so please get cracking during the next few weeks. Send items to me at the e-mail address on the back page. I look forward to reading your stories.

A Big thanks go to Pat Titmas, Bryan Pollard and Ken Collier for the articles produced in this issue of Alert. These help make Alert a much more interesting read than just the regional Reports. Please keep them coming

**Graeme
Editor.**

FEATURED BOAT CLUB

LIONHEARTS SOCIAL EVENTS & CLUB CRUISES 2014

40TH ANNIVERSARY AT GREAT LINFORD

On September 13th 2014 we celebrated 40 years at our present site. The day kicked off with a tree planting ceremony of the commemorative Almond tree by Pat Shrimpton, widow of Ray Shrimpton who was instrumental in obtaining the site 40 years ago, a brass plaque was placed with the tree.



The Commodore Chris Durham gave a thank you speech for all the past members who helped to build the grounds that we enjoy today, with a special mention to the ex Harbour-master Mick O'Connell on this his fortieth year with the club. Mick has been awarded Honorary Membership for his exceptional support and hard work over the past 40 years.



This was followed by an excellent spread of tea and home-made cakes in the Clubs marquee's, which had been decorated out in red to mark the occasion. There was a display of memorabilia in the clubhouse with photos and slides of the clubs history, courtesy of Mick O'Connell. Its amazing what can be done with a

FEATURED BOAT CLUB

CONT

muddy field and brick works all those years ago.

In the evening we had a BBQ with a difference (food cooked in the oven) followed by a barn dance provided by Kelly's Eye who got everyone up on the floor, a very fun evening. We also had a raffle in the evening with fantastic prizes. Our new LED rope lights gave an added ambience to the marquee. An excellent day and evening, fun was had by all who attended.

CLUB CRUISE on the JOHN BUNYAN B&MK TRIP BOAT



On Saturday 6th September we held a club cruise with a difference.

We chartered the B&MK trip boat NB John Bunyan for a trip on the River Ouse in Bedford. We cruised from Bedford Priory Marina to the Anchor at Great Barford for lunch and return.

The volunteer crew were very professional and kept us provided with refreshments and the Buffet food in The Anchor was excellent.

A most enjoyable day and no one had to steer, hold a rope or do a lock.

Many thanks to our Vice Commodore Roger Burnip for organising a unique Club Cruise.

GENERAL MEETING : GUEST SPEAKER JAMES GRIFFIN

We had a break from the norm and invited James from Wyvern Shipping to come to the club on 13th November. He gave an excellent talk and slide show of his cruise to the isle of Scilly in his narrow boat Ocean Princess.

His model of Ocean Princess was very useful in showing the adaptations and equipment that was needed for such an adventure at sea.

It was a very interesting and entertaining evening with some members even requesting that they crew for him on his next big adventure.

This has prompted many members to suggest that we have more guest speakers at our General Meetings in the future which is an excellent idea. Watch this space.

FEATURED BOAT CLUB

BUCKINGHAM CANAL SOCIETY

Lionhearts have adopted the BCS as their charity to raise funds for this year.

We have been running a Bric-a-brac stall in the Clubhouse which is proving immensely popular

CON'T

with the members as they can get rid of all their unwanted stuff and help raise funds for a worthwhile cause..

An even better deal is that we pass on to the BCS any unsold items and they sell them on their own stall throughout the year, so they benefit on both counts. I am sure many people have seen them at various waterside festivals throughout the area.

DEFIBRILLATOR

Lionhearts has just taken delivery of a defibrillator. Some of our members were so keen to have one they clubbed together and purchased it. Its one of those things that we hope never to use but will be grateful we have one should the need arise.



LIONHEARTS CRUISING CLUB

Pat Titmas
Secretary LCC

WHY DON'T YOU DO WHAT PAT DID AND PUT TOGETHER AN ARTICLE LIKE THIS, YOURS COULD BE THE NEXT FEATURED CLUB. Ed

REFLECTIONS ON THE AWCC RALLY

By Bryan Pollard (NW Chairman)

The AWCC 50th Anniversary Rally held at Black Buoy Cruising Club was a reasonable size with 120 boats attending which included a floating market. The mooring was very well organised with Clubs being allocated mooring space marked by signage on the towpath. The entertainment and bar were held in a big marquee erected on a neighbouring farmers field, there was a smaller arts & crafts marquee and exhibitions of classic cars and vintage engines.

Friday 11th we all registered for the Rally received our wrist bands, goodie bags and vouchers for the food we had pre-ordered. Bill & Jennie joined us, they hired a car from the Gnosall area and travelled to the Rally. After registration we all sat on the towpath and tried to complete Helen's 'Flower Quiz', - not easy. Later we had our baked potatoes and went into the main marquee for the official opening of the Rally by Richard Parry and the cutting of the 50th anniversary cake. Later we were entertained by an excellent comedy duo from Birmingham called 'Dandy'. Plenty of wine flowed and we all had a good time.

Saturday 12th. It was up to the Clubhouse for our breakfast baps, maybe not very healthy but very enjoyable. After breakfast we went into the main marquee to be entertained by a guitarist then there were presentations by Richard Parry on the progress and changes made since the start of CRT and his first year as Chief Executive and by Nigel Crowe, Head of Heritage, on the management of the heritage of CRT assets. We had a beef burger lunch then helped out in Clubhouse washing and drying crockery from the cafe. In the evening there was a Hog Roast laid on serving baps as we went into the main marquee for the entertainment. A group were performing the music they thought we wanted, but in reality it wasn't. The wine flowed in more ways than one and we all had a good time. In the interval the National Raffle was drawn, there were many prizes but no one from our Club (Broken Cross Boat Club) won. As the group started their second set it was clear that people were voting with their feet and all the BCBC contingent left and we sat on the towpath for more wine and nattering.

Sunday 13th. It was off to the Clubhouse again for breakfast then some of us went to the church service in the main marquee run by the Christian Boaters Fellowship.

Late morning we watched a one man show called 'Half Cut Theatre' who told tales from working boat days and sang some traditional songs, he was very good. In the afternoon there was a show of dancing in the main marquee then it was back to the boat to have a rest. I was given 12 anniversary best china clay mugs to sell, some of our discerning members bought mugs and now have a memento of the Rally, and others didn't. Later in the evening we all had 'drinks' in John & Jackie's boat, a good way to end the Rally. The following day we were all going our separate ways away from the Rally, some heading towards home and others cruising on to pastures new.

The Rally was well organised for a large rally, the weather throughout the Rally was excellent warm and sunny. It was worth the trip

Bryan Pollard

(Reproduced from Bryan's excellent club mag, Boats Afloat.) Ed

FEATURE ARTICLE

The Return of HMS Pickle

This is the story so far about the attempt by the new owner of Pickle (Mal Nicholson) and a group of volunteers to return Pickle from Gibraltar to Blighty (The Humber region).

Mal who already owns the Humber Super Sloop Spider T, and has a penchant for all things historic purchased Pickle via eBay. He actually bought her as Nelson's Schooner Pickle. As of a few weeks ago, she has now been accepted by National Historic Ships at Greenwich London as HMS Pickle which gives her the prestige she deserves

She was lying in Gibraltar having been used as a party/wedding venue. Sadly the previous owner accepted the money but not the responsibility that comes along with owning a vessel; she is in a very sorry state. That said the hull is good and she has a new engine. The plan was to get her sea worthy enough to motor home, then full restoration.



The party boat berthed in Gibraltar

Early in September Mal set about the Mechanical tasks and a forward party started on the leaking decks. I and a couple of others replaced the forward party on the 16th September and completed the replacement of deck planks and caulking. This reduced the colander effect to a few drips. It is thought that along with moving her away from the arid climate of Gibraltar to a moist atmosphere the swelling of the timbers will make her water tight enough for the trip home.

With materials not only hard to come by but also very expensive in Gibraltar it is a credit to all involved that so much was completed in such a short space of time. After a day of sea trials we set off for Barbate on the Spanish coast on the 4th October. The following day we sailed into Trafalgar Bay

FEATURE ARTICLE

where a wreath was laid in remembrance of all sailors of all nations that were lost there. A special moment for the crew (rum for all) and the vessel as this is where she gained her historic importance to the nation as the bearer of the news of a great naval victory and the sad loss of Admiral Lord Nelson.



Wreaths for the original Pickle and for sailors lost during the battle of Trafalgar.

We returned to Barbate and said good bye to three volunteers, who were now returning to Gibraltar. The next morning the remaining crew of five left the mosquitos and Barbate in good weather but encountered alternator problems, probably caused by the ingress of water from the decks and a lack of use. Our destination was only a short trip to Puerto Sherry in the Bay of Cadiz so we pressed on. Within a couple of hours we encountered unexpected rough seas and suffered major damage to the tops of both of the masts. For a while things were quite bad and the coast guard was informed of the situation by phone as the aerials had come down in the storm. A boat was launched to assess the situation but we managed to steam into the wind at about 2.5 knots until we encountered calmer waters. The trip lasted about 11 hours and as we crossed the Bay of Cadiz we encountered more wind on the port side with an ebbing tide on the starboard side. With mast heads swinging above it was no place for the faint hearted. At one point she was listing 25 degrees side to side. We limped in Puerto Sherry and had an uncomfortable night anchored off the port with the wind blowing all night. The next day we entered the port and assessed the situation. A piece of good luck was the facilities, men and owner of the boat yard at Puerto Sherry. Helpful skilful and even working through siesta they operated cranes and cherry pickers as we stripped both masts and re seated the mizzen that had worked loose in the socket. Whilst we tensioned the masts and shrouds Mal was working on a new alternator and we were ready to go again but had to wait a few days for the winds to ease.

FEATURE ARTICLE



View of the damaged rigging

We said good bye to Puerto Sherry and headed for Mazagon a short trip of 40 miles. As we headed out into the bay of Cadiz we laid a wreath in memory of the original Pickle who was lost there in 1808 without loss of life. There was an eerie feeling of de JA VU but she performed well all day. As we neared Mazagon another storm that had shadowed us out at sea turned towards us with lightening flashes and the wind picking up on the port side we arrived under the safety of the harbour wall with minutes to spare. As we berthed during torrential rain and wind we lost drive and had to haul her in by hand. No sign of help here from the harbour authorities, these guys were the alter ego of the hard workers at Puerto Sherry; these were all manyana and Velcro backsides!

Investigations revealed the propeller had come loose from the shaft and a diver was required to undertake repairs. The next day Mal contacted a friend in Portugal and a diver named Salvador arrived from Teriva. Here was another piece of luck; knowledgeable and hard working along with the team he removed the prop. The lock nut had worked loose and was lost, Salvador ferried Mal off to Portugal and returned the same day with newly machined phosphor bronze nuts and a shaft key. The job was completed the following day; the crew and Pickle had made a new friend in Salvador.

Two more members of crew now had run out of time and headed for home. We were joined here by Phil Warren the grandson of the builders of Spider T at Warren's ship yard in New Holland. With suitable weather and the radio reinstated we left Mazagon with the intention of going to Teriva but the Spanish Navy ordered us to sail a course 20 miles south to avoid oil wells and naval operations. We complied and then headed towards Portugal; a re calculation and discussion resulted in the destination of Vilomoara; resulting in saving a day sailing the next day as a result of two hours extra sailing at the end of the day. We arrived in Vilomoara just before midnight after a 10 hour trip to a great reception from Mal's friend Kevin, his family and friends.

FEATURE ARTICLE



View over the stern of Pickle; at the entrance to Vilomoura and towards the Atlantic and home.

With the windy season closing in Mal has taken the sensible decision to berth Pickle at Vilomoura for 6 months where there is a shipyard, tall ship / wooden boat builder, security and good friends to keep an eye on her. I fully intend to rejoin Pickle; both during repair work and for the remainder of the journey home. I look forward to her return to the UK, and beyond that her full restoration. Do not be in any doubt; Mal will see the task completed!

I feel both privileged and honoured to have been part of the adventure and would like to thank Mal for the opportunity and fellow crew members; Gary Beech, Graham Walker, Phil Warren and Iain Robertson for their companionship and camaraderie. A special thanks to the wives and girlfriends and families of all involved; without their support what has been achieved so far would not have been possible.

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