

# SCUTTLEBUTT

SUSSEX POLICE OFFSHORE SAILING CLUB  
& DINGHY SAILING CLUB



## NEWSLETTER

### Frostbite 2019

*Brendan Wyatt and Erika Owen recount their experiences on this years voyage!*

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### Training Opportunity

*Thanks to Alwyn Evans and the Sussex Yacht Club with assistance from SPOSC.*

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### Vice Commodore

*An update from the committee and the Skippers report on this years Frostbite - Alwyn Evans*

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### Who are they?

*Scuttlebutt No.8 of 1994 reveals the identity of the crew aboard 'Xylonite'*

**Pages 8 to 11**

## COMMODORE'S COMMENT!

Dear Members,

Welcome to another fine edition of Scuttlebutt.

In this edition there are tales from the very enjoyable Frostbite and another story from yesteryear.

Thank you to Alwyn, whose enthusiasm for the club never falters, his article is of interest to all, but especially club Skippers. If you are a club Skipper and would like to run a trip this year there is still time, please contact Alwyn or myself.

The dinghy season is now well under way with a mix of weather, but some great sailing days have got the season off to a good start. The single handed Laser 1 has now been repaired and is back at Lancing, if you wish to use it please contact Bob Trevis or myself. Contact details are on the websites.

If you use any of the club dinghies and discover damage to them, please contact Bob Trevis or myself before continuing to use them.



Thank you Terry for another excellent edition of Scuttlebutt.

Whether you sail dinghies, keel boats or both I hope you manage to find time to get out on the water and have a great time. Remember Terry is always keen to hear your stories and receive your pictures.

*A flappy sail is not a happy sail!*

Owen Poppett Commodore



### Editorial Note

Please remember that this is your magazine and should reflect your views and experiences for the benefit of other members. If you have any comment, articles or photographs you feel are appropriate for inclusion then please forward them to me, [terryclothier@hotmail.com](mailto:terryclothier@hotmail.com) for publication.

*The opinions expressed in articles within Scuttlebutt are those of the individual only and not necessarily those of the Sussex Police Offshore Sailing Club. No responsibility can be accepted for any inaccuracies or omissions.*



## SCUTTLEBUTT

## FROSTBITE



## 2019 Frostbite, by Brendan Wyatt

Crew: Kevin Claxton (Skipper), Dusty Miller, Graham Castell, Roy Jackson, Brendan Wyatt. On Wednesday Phil Mears and Richard Bates joined us.



### Sunday 7th April

Arrived at Gosport Marina at 16:45, however, the Boats were not ready until 18:00. We had planned to sail to Cowes but enjoyed the local Gosport hospitality instead. The decision was taken to stay in Gosport for the evening. We went to The Castle but it was extremely busy. We booked a table for ourselves and the other boat for 7.45 then went to the Nelson for a briefing. We returned to the boat at 18:00 and it was ready. We started to stow our gear and went through the boat inventory to make sure everything was there and in working order. Remarkably, most things were in working order apart from a few minor issues. We then went to The Castle for a hearty roast.

### Monday 8th April

*Wind: North, variable F3 or less, gusting F4 at times*

We left Gosport Marina at 09:30. HMS Dragon, a type-45 destroyer was departing at the same time. We headed up towards the naval refuelling pontoon and went through man over board drill and put the sail up to shake out the reefs to avoid any nasty surprises in the Solent. We then left Portsmouth Harbour, just as HMS Forth, a River-class offshore patrol vessel was leaving, and headed into the Solent. The naval ship had priority! It was very misty, but it cleared at 11:00 with glorious sunshine.



We sailed to Cowes and went pontoon bashing up the Medina then moored for a spot of lunch. After lunch we headed back out into the Solent and had an amazing afternoon of sailing. A competitive spirit was created by seeing who could achieve the best speed over the ground - the best achieved was 10.3 knots.

There was a close shave with an Isle of Wight ferry - Graham in the galley had been informed that we were about to go about. Thinking he could then get to grips with making teas and coffees he settled into the galley only for another ready about two minutes later (to avoid the ferry) followed rapidly by another ready to go about to

resume the desired course once the ferry had passed - a rather shaken and stirred Graham emerged through the hatch with a bemused look on his face. The rest of the afternoon was spent enjoying fair winds and sunshine and we sailed past the Needles and into the English Channel before turning back to the Solent to take advantage of the turning tide. We headed for Lymington and due to the tide going out registered 0.0m on the depth gauge. Fortunately we did not go aground, so this must have been a 'minor' fault with the depth gauge.

We arrived at Lymington as the sun set, ready to join the crews of the other boats only to find we could not get shore power. The best part of an hour was spent trying to rectify the problem, without success. We had to borrow an extension cable from the marina. We concluded that this must have been the faulty element. However, a hearty meal, courtesy of Roy, washed down with some fine red grape juice soon restored spirits and flagging bodies.





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## 2019 Frostbite, by Brendan Wyatt (continued)

We discovered back in Gosport that the Commodore (Owen) has a distinct loathing for a certain pub chain (Cryptic Clue: Sounds like the state of the atmosphere mixed with an eating implement. N.B. other pub chains are available). We did hear that in Lymington he did enter one of these establishments (and he wasn't particularly happy about it when he paid our boat a visit later).



### Tuesday 9th April

*Wind: North East variable F3 or less*

Due to the tides the crew went for a wander through Lymington after a lazy breakfast. We left Berthon at 11:00 and put up the sails in misty and drizzly conditions with stronger winds. We headed over towards Cowes. Sailing with the tide (rising) we made rapid progress, although the drizzle was continuous.

We decided to head up the Beaulieu river as far as Buckler's Hard and had a spot of lunch on board before heading back out into the Solent. The weather was deteriorating so we went straight into Cowes and agreed to meet up with Owen's boat later in the evening. Another wonderful meal was had, courtesy of Graham this time. We then headed into town to meet the other crew, but a slight navigational error meant that the skipper, Graham and myself went sailing past the pub, right to the other end of the main street

without spotting it. Dusty had stopped about 5 minutes earlier and we did wonder why. On returning we did then spot the other crew standing outside the pub and Dusty nicely ensconced in the warmth inside.

### Wednesday 10th April

*Wind: North East F5 or 6*

The morning started overcast but then the sun came out. Roy, who is a mechanic, decided to check the engine and discovered a water leak. As the engine warmed up the leak reduced (another 'minor' fault discovered).

We returned to Gosport to pick up another two crew members, Phil Mears and Richard Bates. We also took two crew members from the Commodore's boat who were returning to Gosport, Julie Dow and Erica Owen.

We had another good sail back to Gosport. We mentioned the water leak to Commodore Yachting who came onboard to have a look. They were surprised that no one had mentioned this to them before, as it had clearly been like this for some time!

After Phil and Richard had stowed their gear and the round of introductions made we sailed from Gosport to Yarmouth in glorious sunshine and a north easterly wind, perfect sailing weather. We left Gosport about 13.30 and arrived at Yarmouth at 16.30. After mooring up the crew headed into Yarmouth for a pre-dinner aperitif. It was my turn to cook the evening meal so I returned to the boat early with Graham to make the preparations. This was followed by the obligatory cheese and biscuits and wine / port etc.

During the night we were woken by a tremendous banging (not the after effects of the evening meal!). The wind had picked up and was pushing the boat onto the pontoon. Dusty got up and

adjusted the fenders, as they were riding up and the boat was in danger of hitting the pontoon. After about half an hour it quietened down. Luckily, no damage was sustained.



### Thursday 11th April

*Wind: North East F4 or 5 veering East F3/4*

*We awoke to a cold, crisp and clear morning After another full English breakfast we left Yarmouth and sailed with the tide, East up the Solent. The wind was from the North east and the sun shone. We went into Cowes and up the Medina and practised coming alongside the jetty, at the same time as trying to avoid a few other boats who seemed determined to get in our way as often as possible. After most of the crew had taken a turn or two practising we moored up and had lunch in near summer conditions.*

We left the Medina and then headed North across the Solent to Southampton Water and we got up close and personal with a large container ship coming into Southampton. With no further incidents we went up the Hamble and decided to berth at Swanwick, which had the added bonus of being free for us as a premier marina. It also boasted the best showers of the week!

As it was the last night of Frostbite we went ashore for the final evening meal. Appetites were clearly eager, due no doubt to plenty of fresh air and energetic sailing. Not much was left on the plates. Upon our return to the boat the cheese and biscuits surfaced once more and were devoured eagerly.

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## 2019 Frostbite, by Brendan Wyatt (continued)



### Friday 12th April

*Wind:: East / North East F3 or 4,  
occasionally 5*

The morning was cold and clear with ice on the pontoon - we could legitimately call it a Frostbite!

We tried to fill up the water tank but the battered hose was short by a few feet - manoeuvres were started to pull the boat forward. Once filled up and the crew had had their breakfast we headed back out for the last leg of the adventure.

When we were in Southampton water we decided to put up the sails. Just as we turned into wind to start putting up the sails another yacht behind us also did the same, although he was single crewed. We thought he had enough space, however he was on a direct collision course with us so we went about to give him some more room. After we had cleared him we again turned into wind, put the sails up and then had some more excellent sailing east back towards Gosport.

We arrived at the approach to Portsmouth harbour at 12:30. As we were entering the harbour the same yacht that had managed to get in our way in Southampton water now proceeded to get in the way of several other yachts coming into Portsmouth. A few choice words were heard on our boat and I am sure the same sentiments were echoed on the other yachts.

After refuelling we returned the yacht safe and sound, and probably in a slightly better condition, to Commodore Yachting. It was another brilliant week's sailing in excellent company. A big thank you to Kevin the skipper and the whole crew for making it such an enjoyable experience.



## 2019 Frostbite, by Erika Owen (a new experience)

*In the beginning of 2019 I decided to join SPOSC, I'm a full time serving officer who fancied a new challenge and sailing sounded fun, so I signed up for Frostbite (despite its name) .*

*I set off from Eastbourne on a foggy wet Sunday in April and headed to Gosport wondering why I had thought this was a good idea. My friend Julie had agreed to accompany me, as I was told I was the only female on this trip and, not relishing the thought of being the only girl amongst three boatful's of retired coppers, she kindly agreed to come.*

*With trepidation, a lot of reservations and a constant voice in my head telling me that if I didn't step out of my comfort zone, I would never experience new things, we arrived at Gosport Marina to be met (in sunshine) by a very smiley Owen Poplett and Graham Castell ,who immediately made us feel welcome. We soon met up with the others and divided up into our boats. Ours was a 36 ft Bavaria Cruiser called 'No Optimist' which didn't bode well, but it was very nice and Julie and I popped our first Quell and climbed aboard. We had a cabin in the bow which was actually very comfortable, although Julie chose*

*to sleep on the sofa area for the second two nights for more space.*



*Day 1 was amazing sunshine and we had such a great day sailing. Every worry I had about not enjoying sailing went out of the window . My skipper Phil and crew mates Owen and Pete Kennett were great fun and really made the trip enjoyable. Each evening we moored up and met the others for a pub dinner. What I hadn't expected was how happy retired coppers are, they were a group of friends loving life and it was so good to hear the laughter and banter that went on amongst them and they made us very welcome to their group. Day 2 was raining but still good fun and Day 3 was fair and we jumped aboard another team's boat and had a nice sail in a 44 footer back to Gosport. Julie and I really enjoyed the experience and learnt a lot about sailing*

*So I'll say to anyone who is thinking about joining and may be put off by lack of sailing experience, not being part of the retired set or being too scared of being sick, put those fears away and join SPOSC, sailing is fab.. even in the rain!*



**With thanks to  
Kevin Claxton  
for the  
photography**



# SCUTTLEBUTT TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

## SPOSC Subsidised RYA Yachting Courses at Sussex Yacht Club Shoreham

SPOSC has negotiated with Sussex Yacht Club (SYC) at Shoreham discounted prices for RYA theory & practical courses. These are important and excellent courses for Club members, and our future skippers, to develop and gain greater knowledge of the theory and practical knowledge of sailing. These discounts make them excellent value.

### RYA Day Skipper, RYA Coastal Skipper & Yachtmaster ~



These theory navigation courses are conducted at the S.Y.C. classroom over the winter months, attending in a combination of evenings & one day on weekends.

Course syllabus covers navigation, meteorology, safety equipment, safety briefings, passage planning & pilotage.

A special reduced price has been negotiated with SYC for SPOSC members of £285 (reduced from £385) for the theory course. Same courses run by commercial sailing companies can be in excess of £400.

Following on from the course you will have the opportunity to attend a 5 day RYA Practical Course. Several courses are arranged by Sussex Yacht Club through Fairview Sailing, Port Hamble Marina for the Spring or Autumn in the Solent. SPOSC offer a £100 subsidy to members attending a RYA Day Skipper or Coastal Course who aspire to be Club Skippers.

### VHF Radio Course ~

Course covers VHF communications, radio equipment, GMDSS operation procedures, VHF procedures & regulations.

Course is conducted at Sussex Yacht Club, Shoreham.

A special reduced price has been negotiated with SYC for SPOSC members of £90. SPOSC will subsidise Members further by paying the RYA Exam fee of £60. Course Dates for VHF are Saturday 31st August & 26th October 2019. If interested in completing any of the above courses, or indeed any Royal Yachting Association theory or practical courses then email Vice Commodore Alwyn Evans ~

[alwynevensuk@yahoo.com](mailto:alwynevensuk@yahoo.com)





# SCUTTLEBUTT

## Update from Vice-Commodore Alwyn Evans

Many who sail with, or know me will hopefully appreciate I am always trying to promote or improve SPOSC. Apart from the enjoyment of sailing with the club, it's great to see crew members and skippers develop with the club and also partake in the great social side of the charters.

It's very important that as a Committee we publicise a active and varied calendar which also spreads our events during the sailing season to give every member the opportunity to sail with the club on at least one, if not more occasions.

A little early you may think, but certain changes to events this year caused me to look at our sailing calendar for 2020 and give thought to how we can improve on all the events we aim to achieve each year.

We try and run a charter approximately every couple of months between April and September, but unfortunately we do not on all occasions have sufficient skippers for all of the events.

2019 has also seen a change to our racing calendar. The National Police Sailing Championships (PSUK) have seen a revival by linking up with the National Crime Agency Championships held in the Solent during the last week in September. Therefore we have, I believe quite rightly switched our allegiance and support from the Fire & Emergency Services Regatta in May to the PSUK event in September.

Normally we have run the annual Offshore Passage Charter to France, Channel Islands or West Country in September. With the racing now in September it makes sense to spread our charter dates out to give every member an opportunity to sail during other months and move the Passage Charter to June.

These are the two significant changes to our annual sailing calendar and all of the usual charters we do, Frostbite and Solent Charters will be spread over the rest of the sailing season.

Frostbite which first originated in 1994 was again a great success this year with over 20 members afloat for the April week amongst 3 club charters and a members yacht. However, we are now struggling for skippers to run the scheduled June Solent charter. If this is to be cancelled it means we will not run an event until the August Passage Charter to the West Country. This means members missing out on some great summer sailing months.

I will be contacting all Club skippers and 1st Mates in the coming months to discuss their availability to skipper charters for 2020. Hopefully this planning can ensure that we respect the personal time skippers have available to undertake club charters, spread our skippers throughout the sailing calendar and develop some of our Day Skippers from 1st Mates to become SPOSC 'authorised and approved' skippers. These charters can be mid week Monday to Friday or weekends Friday to Sunday depending on your availability.

At the May Committee Meeting we have agreed a 2020 Sailing Calendar which gives a commitment to run a charter every other month from April to September. Generally there are many members on holiday during July and August so we tend to avoid those months. However if there is sufficient interest and support to run a charter and skippers are available then it can be done.

Hopefully all of the above will have the benefit of sustaining an active club, providing more dates & opportunities for members to go sailing and ensure future interest in the club.

If you have any thoughts or suggestions on any of the above then please email me.

***Remember 'amateurs built the Ark and professionals built the Titanic!'***



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## 2019 Frostbite, by Alwyn Evans

2019 saw about twenty members of SPOSC attend the Frostbite event reinforcing its popularity since its inception in 1994. With 3 charter boats and one club members yacht out for the week, it was good to see our more senior members, existing and both new crew and skippers afloat for the week.



We chartered a Beneteau 37ft 'Ellie B' from Gosport Marina, with a crew of Harry Mallon, Peter Ewen, Dave Cherry and myself, Alwyn Evans. I believe we have a combined age of over 260yrs+.

However, all week we danced about the yacht like gazelles, out sailed other yachts, socialised till midnight and went home exhausted but happy,

The original plan was for all 3 yachts, No Optimist, Adelaide Star and ourselves to leave Portsmouth on the Sunday evening for Cowes. However delays with the others taking over their yachts meant that due to 'our speedy boarding' like Easy Jet I suppose, we left on our own and arrived in Cowes about 7pm. There we met up with SPOSC members Skipper Len Wheeler on board his yacht Anita, with his crew Frank Hooper, Geoff Randle and guest Russell. The usual social evening of a few drinks and a bite to eat was spent in the Anchor pub followed by a few mugs of Ovaltine on board Ellie B before retiring

Monday, bright sunny day, we departed Cowes about 1030. There was a strong west running

tide and easterly winds. If we headed for our destination immediately we would arrive in Lymington within the hour. We tacked easterly in the opposite direction for an hour or so until we met No Optimist motoring West at North Ryde Middle buoy just north of Osbourne Bay. From here we hoisted our spinnaker and reached back and forth across the Solent until our arrival at Lymington about 1600. We berthed at the beautiful Town Quay in the centre of this historic town along with crew of Anita and relatively few other yachts. After dinner on board, the crews of No Optimist, Anita and Ellie B all met in the Kings Head to discuss knots, tides and really other interesting sailing things over a Sherry. Tuesday was a pretty grey day, overcast and rain. After departing Lymington we took the tide to Cowes with a pretty uneventful sail together with No Optimist. At Gurnard Ledge the wind died visibility became poor and we motored the last few miles (actually nautical miles) with drizzle to Cowes Yacht Haven. Anita stayed overnight in Newtown Creek as they had to head back to Chichester over the next few days. The usual debrief was conducted after dinner in the Pier View pub, together with crews of No Optimist and Adelaide Star.

Wednesday saw the return of the sun with good winds and we departed Cowes about 1100, once again tacking against strong winds and tide to Newtown

Creek. After a leisurely lunch the winds eased and we had a gentle sail to Yarmouth Harbour, joined shortly after by the other two yachts. A rather pleasant evening was spent over dinner in the Kings Head.

Thursday saw a bright day with strong east winds which gave us a good beat down to Osbourne Bay for lunch. As usual the wind then died and we had a gentle sail and motor to Port Hamble Marina. A very pleasant evening was spent with the crew of No Optimist, sundowners on board and dining at Ye Olde Whyte Harte pub in Hamble village.

Friday also gave us a great beat from the Hamble until we entered the yachts home port of Portsmouth Harbour at midday and concluded the weeks sailing. A really good week sailing, great crew and enjoyable evenings spent with existing and also some new members and skippers to the club



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**Never one to refuse a challenge!**

*When our Commodore asked me to research Scuttlebutt for information on the picture (shown right) I headed for my library.*

*The following article, written by the late 'Gentleman John Batley' gives details of the crew and the character building events of this exciting voyage undertaken by members of SPOSC.*

*The Editor*



**Who are they? Q:**

**A:**

The below appeared on another FB group. Does any one know who the SPOSC was struggling to get qualified SPOSC members are? Debbie Ashmore is on the helm. skippers at the time and Debbie had

With rain pelted down outside contacts at the Cirdan sailing trust. thought this one was in keeping with the Therefore as SPOSC secretary I was able conditions! Members of the Force to get exceptionally low charter rates as it Offshore Sailing Club took part in a week- was a charity. The charters offered training long sail on 'Xylonite' an 88ft fully rigged for comp crew and day skippers. There Thames Barge in September 1993. Part of must be a record of the Cirdan trust East the voyage from Maldon to the Blackwater coast trips in archived scuttlebutt. Estuary left the crew coping with winds Unfortunately I don't know who the others gusting to Force 8! **Owen Poplett** in the picture are. **Alan Haffenden**

## FROM SCUTTLEBUTT NO.6 1993

### East Coast Cruise (Roger Dice)

I have received a number of very gratifying comments concerning the 'Barge Trip'. This was something very different and as far as I can tell everybody thoroughly enjoyed it. It is no easy thing having to be so totally reliant on catering on board. For those of us who slog across the Channel (..sorry, Ditch!) on an intravenous coffee drip and a packet of 'fun' Mars Bars, salvation from starvation is at hand in the shape of French 'eating houses'. For those who undertook this event it was not a matter of, "Where is the nearest restaurant?" All the catering needs had to be thought out well ahead and organised so that all tastes were considered. It then had to be purchased and transported. It then had to work. The fact that it did and was such a success is due to the considerable efforts of Debbie Ashmore. On behalf of all those who sailed and the remainder of the Club may I publicly offer her thanks.



# SCUTTLEBUTT

## 'And a Star to Steer Her By'

***A view of life on a barge off the east coast***  
**By John Batley (Scuttlebutt No.8 January 1994)**

**East Coast Barge Trip 6th - 9th September 1993**

Captain: 'James'  
First Mate: 'Piers'

### CREW

Debbie Ashmore  
Kate Bulkeley and brother William  
Tom Reeder  
Alan McInnes and son Ian  
Nikki O'Donnel  
Sharon Goodes  
Nigel Kemp  
Chris Sparkes  
John Batley and son Chris



### **The Star: The Barge 'Xylonite'**

Setting off at 0900 from your home in Lewes, Chris and I gave ourselves three hours to get to Maldon having experienced the deadly delays of the Dartford Tunnel past, but we had a 'traffic-jam free' run and arrived at 1030. A full hour and thirty minutes before we had to meet the rest of the crew. Plenty of time to find the rendezvous point at the Cirdan Trust offices, which, looking at the map supplied by Debbie, appeared to be half the size of Maldon but which, in reality, was half the size of the old Brighton Clock Tower police box.

No one else arrived so we went down to the quayside to find the barge. It was like entering a time warp. Five barges, all beautifully preserved, were moored to the cobbled quay. *Xylonite* was rafted out next to *Ironside* and *Pudgy*.

Next: Breakfast. Tried to find a cafe but could not get past the door of "The Swan!" A mistake I will not make again! Made it back to the Cirdan offices just in time to be directed to the quayside where the other ten members of the crew were assembled. It comprised boys and girls aged sixteen to those who looked and felt sixty. *Pub breakfasts have a lot to answer for!*

A human chain was organised by the girls to ferry personal kit and food aboard the barge. The baggage was on in five minutes. The victuals took considerably longer. Kit on bunks, food in galley, crew in pub! The "Jolly Sailor" this time. Lunch and a pint and under orders to be back on board by 1400. As we had been informed that *Xylonite* was a 'dry' ship, we replenished our tanks and almost made it back to the vessel by 1400. Blame the girls - they went shopping.

A quick tour of the barge:

The saloon, situated amidships, could best be described as a ballroom with a restaurant sized kitchen at one end. For'ard along the gangway, the girl's cabins. A three berth and a four berth. Next, the port and starboard heads. Then, the boys cabin - eight berths!

Topside on the foc'sle was a roomy, two berth for the Mate Piers, which can best be described as - 'lived in'.

Aft, behind the engine room, a single berth, piled a terre for the Captain, James, which can best be described ... by ... *whatshername!*

The Captain and the Mate gave the crew a rundown on safety aboard and the girls gave us our 'team tasks' as Cooks and Galley Slaves. Just time for a cup of tea before starting the 85hp engine and casting off at 1520.

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As most of us didn't know our aft from our elbow on a vessel of this size, Captain James took the big beautiful wooden helm to guide the barge down the crowded narrow channel, whilst the Mate dropped the 16' bowsprit into place. The engine is big but the vessel is 86 feet long and weighs 50 tons, so, apart from manoeuvring in confined spaces and steadying the stern when it is not possible to raise the mizzen, it is rarely used.

As soon as we had cleared the 'trot' moored yachts, under the instruction of the Mate, we made sail. We ran up the Mainsail, Topsail, Foresail Jib, and Mizzen. Then we were off, 'short-tacking' down the Blackwater estuary, with lots of - "Going about!" - "Leeboard UP!" - Leeboard DOWN!" and "Lee hoooo..." ing.

We had planned to berth for the night in Brightlingsea but the Captain, knowing the tides and weather, felt a morning departure for our next destination would be well nigh impossible from that position. So he decided to moor off Bradwell, which comprised a marina and a nuclear power station. The marina was too small to take the vessel and the power station was too large to ignore. We dropped anchor some way off shore and were promised a very rough and wet ride if we went ashore in the dinghy. No one felt that much in need of *refreshment*. An impending 0600 start on the 'morrow ensured everyone stayed on board. The evening was spent tackling a shepherds pie of enormous proportions followed by fruit flan which should have been topped with raspberries and whipped cream. The raspberries had disappeared and..... we'll gloss over what Sharon did with the whipped cream! There followed a lunatic evening of ACR Whist and "Walnut" played with oranges. Further explanation is a) impossible and b) undesirable.

Most of the crew were up at 0600 and *all* were ready to weigh anchor and set sails at 0700. Breakfast was cooked and eaten 'on the move' which was a credit to the non-sailors - both cooks and consumers. The wind was North East and force 6+. We were travelling north, thus necessitating frequent tacks. Those manning the jib - got wet. The foresail - sore hands. The leeboards - completely knackered. But Oh! Was it worth it!. She sailed like a dream.

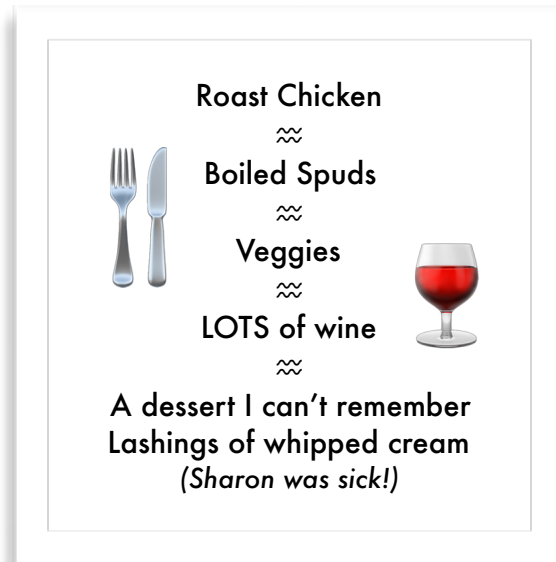
Lunch was taken on the run as we sailed up the coast past Clacton, Frinton and finally, Walton where we rounded the Naze into the River Orwell (situated between the ports of Harwich and Felixstowe) and on up to the small village of Pinmill where we picked up a buoy. This is a simple statement of fact but not as easy as it sounds. The Skipper is 70 feet from the bow and the buoy is ten feet below deck level! The 'operation' necessitated hanging the Mate, Piers, complete with boathook, over the bow by his ankles. Vessel secure, there was a race to lower the dinghy and run ashore to the nearest dry land. This was followed by a walk through a nature trail to Pinmill and the 'Butt and Oyster'. I have had more enthusiastic welcomes from landlords but that said, the Tolley Ale is recommended. The Captain had put us straight on the 'dry ship' rules. It only applied to children's parties. so a visit to the local 'offy' was next on the agenda. By the time we returned to the *Xylonite*, the wind had increased and the tide had turned. It was a very, very wet ride back. Supper was a vat of Bolognese and 'several miles' of spaghetti. This had the effect of putting everybody on their back and dissuading any of the crew from returning to Pinmill. Cards, reading and listening to one member snoring were the main activities of what was left of the evening.

After a late....ish breakfast, we slipped the buoy and started down the river. The wind was again North East 6, so it was 'all hands on deck' to man the sails and leeboards. We 'short tacked' from one side of the river to the other to reach the estuary. Our waypoint was the Landguard North Cardinal where *Xylonite* was to turn south to follow the coast. The forecast was for "NE 6 with squalls", so the topsail and mizzen were kept furled and the Captain kept a weather eye open for the 'squalls', ordering the jib to be dropped every time one appeared. The engine was kept running to steady the stern. It was a straight run down to the mouth of the Blackwater where we turned west into the estuary at the Eagle South Cardinal. This was followed by a run up to Bradwell where each member of the crew was given instructions, by the Captain, on helming the vessel. Doing figures of eight while the crew worked the sails and leeboards. Meanwhile, Piers was playing with a pole on the mast which he informed us was for a sail, used in barge racing, which was a cross between a cruising shute and a spinnaker. There was a 'meet' the following Saturday. *Xylonite* and fifteen other vessels were taking part. We were told it was going to be fast and furious but - quite a spectacle.

We finally dropped anchor in the mid-afternoon off Bradwell Marina. A run ashore was called for. The boys to the pub. The girls to go shopping! We were all to be disappointed. Bradwell was closed. We did meet one lady pedestrian who turned out to be the proprietor of the post office / supermarket. She flatly refused to open up. It was half day closing. And that was that! Thank you and good-bye! On returning to the marina to meet the dinghy containing the rest of the crew, to pass on the glad tidings, we were met by the Harbourmaster. There was no beating about the bush..... "You lot can bugger off!" We bade a fond farewell to Bradwell and returned to our friendly *Xylonite*.

# SCUTTLEBUTT

The crew contented themselves in showering and shaving and preparing for their last supper on board.



Nobody could be persuaded to make the trip back to Bradwell and the late evening entertainment comprised an electrical storm out in the North Sea.

Thursday started as it was to continue. Very lazy as no-one wanted to start the last leg prior to departure from the 'old girl'. It was 1100 hours before the anchor got weighed. The next couple of hours were spent 'gilling' about in the river, gradually working our way up to Osea Island where the anchor was dropped. No further progress you'd be made up river due to the falling tide, no wind and a complete lack of will! It was a beautiful afternoon to do nothing. But 'nothing' doesn't happen on a barge. Captain, Mate and crew went from stem to stern checking equipment and rigging for the race later in the week. Then the donkey work started. Scrubbing, cleaning, polishing and coiling (cheesing) of ropes to give the finishing touches to the turnout of the old barge. Some short distance off, a grey seal bobbed about in the water watching our activities.

As the tide flooded, the anchor was raised and the vessel started towards Maldon Quay. The crew started packing their own kit and squaring up the barge below decks. Arriving off the quay, we noticed all the barges moored head towards the sea. James indicated we would be doing the same. The river at this point is no place to do a 'three point turn' under power so traditional methods were to be employed. The manoeuvre is effected by dropping the anchor where you want the stem to finish up. The tide swings your stern round - majestically! Simple and effective. Everyone was very impressed - until the Mate ordered us "raise the anchor again!" The barge was rafted to two others and once secure, shorelines were run out. *Xylonite* was home again.

All our personal gear was sent ashore and 'Certificates of Incompetence' were presented by the Captain to each of the crew. And well deserved they were too! Reluctant farewells were made, with promises to make a return visit. It had been 80 miles of pure nostalgia and pleasure. If you get the chance - **do it!**

