

Gravesend Reach



The Magazine of the Gravesend Sailing Club

Winter 2020

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Front Cover Photo: Sean Coomber.
Back Cover Photos: John Green

Editorial Ripple and Commodore's Codpiece

Firstly, a big thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition of the Gravesend Reach and I hope that you will enjoy reading it. We have one unusual feature this year in the form of a centre page pull-out safety boat check list which is designed to set you thinking.

I would also urge that if you are minded to contribute to future editions that you don't wait until asked but do so while it is fresh in your mind or at least write some notes you can refer to later.

I had for many years been thinking of writing up a sail I undertook in a GP14 from Gravesend to Tonbridge and back in 1976 (the long hot summer) which I was sure would be a classic to rival Jerome K Jerome. However the details now elude me.

I know the week was windy, that the tidal Thames and Medway were choppy and trying to sleep when soaked isn't easy. I recall chatting to a couple in the Malta Inn about how they had to seek assistance from the Coastguard because of the conditions and that they had been in a 40' motor launch.

I remember that I knew I had to buy a permit and could do so from the first Marina we came to. But, I hadn't realised until we came to the first unstaffed lock that we needed our own lock key. Fortunately, we obviously weren't the only ones to make this mistake as we were directed to a house in the village that sold them and weren't surprised by our asking.

I am sure that I would have been able to tease out the humour of losing my shaver overboard half way through removing 5 days growth or of waking up to find that we had tied the tent in the darkness to a sign saying "No Camping".

The return journey had to be rushed to beat the closure of all the locks due to lack of water.

If I had not waited 44 years to write up the story I may have remembered more and actually made it funny.

They say things come in threes! First the crane, then the floodgate and now coronavirus has inhibited our activities. Thankfully prompt action by the Covid working group earlier this year ensured lift in went ahead safely and sailing activities could resume, albeit slightly adjusted and with less social interaction.

The Covid working group have worked hard since then in the background, ensuring the club is operating safely, and as I type they are dealing with the announcement of the second lockdown in England and its impact on lift out. If you are anything like me, being able to sail has been a huge outlet during this difficult summer season and I definitely feel the loss, having just put the boat to bed for the winter.

That said, the committee have managed to turn this season around into something positive. With an unoccupied clubhouse it was a good time to upgrade some of the windows to double glazing. Viewing races from the clubhouse should be less foggy and much warmer next year. We also managed a bumper working weekend earlier in the year and had a brilliant turn out from many club members. As always there are still many other maintenance jobs to do...somehow I think we might all be looking for occupation this winter so you never know, they might get done!

Training has focussed on dinkabouts this year, with the help of single household safety crews and safe distancing of mixed households. It has been challenging but not impossible - shown by a couple of new members joining! The safety crew also had some excitement with an inverted dinghy during a July K&N. I think they were pleased to put their skills to the test and the dinghy crew didn't actually seem to object to their dunk in the Thames!

We've also done several online Knowledge and Nosh sessions from running a race to Ernest Shackleton and celestial navigation! It has been great to maintain contact with members and it has been noted that zoom allows all parties to have a glass of wine whilst watching and still allows a social natter afterwards! Going forward, Kevin Day is joining the training team to coordinate these evening events - please do get in touch if you

can chat for in excess of 20 minutes on a topic. Perhaps we need an upper limit as well for some members...

Next year well, we'll have to see what happens, but the hope is for a significant number of sailing events including dink abouts and training, to make up for lost time this year as well as attract some new members. It certainly will be all hands on deck!

Stay safe, stay merry and remember that GSC is a community and we're here over the winter as well as the summer. For online events, virtual cups of tea, and for those itching to get out of the house, we will gladly put you to work maintaining the club!

What did you do during lockdown?

Val Green

It all started with a WhatsApp from Ginny offering 'chitted' seed potatoes to a good home. Harriet was just starting a veg patch in her new garden, Richard and Deb and Penny and Steve fancied some and the Green's decided to dig up some of their grass to have a go.



Potatoes were duly distributed, nestling in egg boxes. Spurred on by this generosity, everyone got digging, sowing and planting.



And from July we reaped the benefit and are still doing so.

If you want to keep in touch with other members why not join the WhatsApp group?

Just email Val Green – membership@gravesendsc.org.uk

First of all congratulations to Harriet and John Davies-Mullen on the addition to their family and welcome to baby Edward. Following in the family tradition he had his first sail at just three days old.



Despite the best laid plans of a virus and a government, we have managed to get some boats afloat and to welcome other new

members over the summer. The group of summer sailors took to the water as often as possible and many of our less experienced sailors came down. They were able to welcome the new members and make sure they got some sailing experience, both in dinghies and cruisers. The new members are

- Andy Barnes, a freelance photographer, who has taken some wonderful pictures of the sailing over the summer. We hope to get them up-loaded to the website for all to see.
- Mark Smith who has bought Gamekeeper
- Chris Olsen who has bought Billy Ruffin

There are now quite a few new boats and new cruiser owners in the Club.

James Gray has bought a third boat, a GK29 which will be named Greylag. Roy Turner has a new home in the Basin, a Westerly called Seaforth. The Wimpory's have a Moody, Dayspring. Caroline Richardson bought Magic and Lliisa and Jason Blowes have bought Zulu. The Greens have bought a Hardy Pilot 20, Spur of the Moment, which they are mooring in Oxford where their daughter lives. Their Westerly Dee Gee, now renamed Polar Bear, will be moving to the Medway.



The Clubhouse has had something of a face lift recently. New double glazed windows and doors on its north face mean that the view over the river is much improved and hopefully the

winter temperature inside will be better and the fuel bills lower.

On the Tuesday while they were being installed two older members came to visit – Keith and Sheila Bradshaw. They are both well and send regards to all members. I also bumped in to former members Jill and Keith Smith, who bought Still Life from the Greens.

Sadly we had news of the deaths of three members. The Reach is the chance for members who knew them to remember them with affection. Members' memories of Chris Price and Tom Helm are included elsewhere in the Reach.

In August, Roy Turner had a call from Tony Drew's daughter with the news that Tony had died. Tony joined the Club in 1961 and bought a Dayboat, Puffin. He was boatswain for a few years. Roy says that they quickly discovered a personal connection as Tony sold Puffin to Ron Menhennick, who he bought her from! Apparently he was always talking about the club even when in the clutches of Alzheimers towards the end. The family asked for a club burgee for the funeral and we were able to do this. His daughter wrote 'Thanks to Val Green and Richard Twyman we were able to have a burgee on top of the coffin and a well-sailed one with Dad.'

It seems most likely that we won't be back to normal before the next sailing season but watch the Newsletter for Zoom events. Both Training and Social have their thinking caps on.

If you're fed up with being home all the time then you could volunteer to do something around the Club. Roy Turner who organises this will have a list of jobs for anyone who's willing – and many of them can be done mid-week when the Club is quiet.

Tom Helm, who passed away at the end of August, was an active member of the club with his wife Sue, sailing their Seadog yacht, New Wanderer.

Past Commodore Leon Ferguson has fond memories of his first sailing trip to Holland in company with New Wanderer, Prion with Chris Cook and Pat Robb, Sigmagreta, a Sigma 33 sailed by Dave Wickers and Paula Robb, and Leon's Sigma 33, Troy, with Chris's daughter Sue as crew. Sue and Tom were accompanied by their daughters Amanda and Laura.

Many social evenings were passed together, in particular one night at Kamperland marina, opposite Veere, where the restaurant staff said they were going home and "could we finish and lock the door behind us when we left!". Amanda had been recently diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, but that didn't stop them finding a way to get her on board Troy and down into the cabin for a dinner in company.

Pat and Paula Robb and Chris Cook remember that Tom, Sue and the two girls were a delightful family. 'We sailed to Holland with them for two weeks; it was delightful. Having a wheelchair on board their boat was no problem. They were able to sail right up to our designated area at the pontoons and visit all the local areas. We had so much fun on that trip and a great deal of laughter, not to forget the amazing BBQ's on small islands, and ran into no problems. Tom and Sue were keen members of the club and of course supported Sailability. The trip we made with them made Chris and me more aware of what problems they could have experienced, but by giving people prior knowledge of their situation people were very co-operative. We had no climbing over 15 boats to reach the pontoons! We also had the best view in restaurants.'

Some of you may also remember how Tom loved dancing, and was often seen throwing himself around the dance floor at a Duck Supper.

More recently Sue and Tom had been living in France near Angouleme, where they were restoring a farmhouse. Tom had just finished a round of golf when he suffered a heart attack in the bar at the golf club.

He was a great guy and will be remembered fondly by many Club members.

His daughter Laura wrote, 'It is with deepest sadness and in great shock that we have to pass on the news that my dad, Tom Helm, died suddenly on Monday 31st August. He had a heart attack whilst playing golf. None of us can comprehend the fact that he is gone. But we have to take comfort from the fact that his passing was very quick, he wouldn't have suffered, and he died a very happy man. My dad was so proud of all the fundraising for Multiple Sclerosis we achieved since Amanda was diagnosed in 2001. Instead of flowers, we think he would have wanted the money to go to this brilliant charity. If you would like to make a small donation in his memory, thank you.'



Sailability has been my baby for quite some time as Secretary. It was Gravesend Sailing Club's Charitable Arm. It started off with a handful of enthusiastic pioneers who wanted to help a few equally enthusiastic disabled members to sail.

Gravesend Sailing Club might be lively and encouraging to new people but it does have its drawbacks. Firstly it is hard to enter if you are in a wheelchair or partially sighted and cannot manage steps. It is not so long ago that the only way to access a boat was by climbing a vertical ladder with no safety rail to access the boat and then the shore.

Sailability started off with a handful of members to raise money for the club to add extra facilities for the disabled members. We have been monitored by the RYA and we are a registered charity which enables us to purchase products at zero rate VAT. We invested in new life jackets and some weatherproof equipment and we bought the Wayfarer dinghy "Freedom" for the use of any disabled sailors. More recently she has been used in sail training.

We raised money in the usual fashion; raffles, club meals, knitted toys, sale of books, obtaining funding grants from various organisations who donate sums of money to good causes and charities. At one time we had over 45 members but most of the originals have passed away now and our numbers have dwindled. We are restricted by RYA rules over what any money we raise can be spent on.

One of the biggest and costly projects the club has been involved in was to promote the building and installation of the pontoon. All members were involved in this huge project: architects, planners, designers, negotiators, fund raisers, mud clearers, tea makers etc. We have a whole host of skills at GSC! We had no idea what an asset this scheme would become.

Sailability bought a hoist and slings. Some disabled people came from the local KASBAH group and would enjoy an afternoon at the club sailing and motor boat rides. Jean Twyman one of our oldest members was able to go sailing on her 90th birthday.

We also purchased a much larger boat the 33 ft Hartley Freelanders Sloop. Members did a considerable amount of work on her, making her more suitable for disabled people but found that the overall cost of maintenance, storage and moorings were becoming excessive. We managed to sell her and she is now enjoying sailing in Plymouth.

Times have changed we have found that members are too busy working and coping with long travel journeys. They have lost enthusiasm for doing even more charity work with Sailability. As volunteers to run Sailability did not step forward it was decided to close Sailability.

We do have funding available and have discussed with Chris Steer and Roy Turner how the remaining funds can be put to good use for disabled people to access the clubhouse more easily.

I would like to thank Chris Cook and Steve Davies and all past members for all the hard work they have carried out for Sailability right to the end.

It has been several years since I last wrote an article for the "Reach." I was editor for 12 years and realise how arduous it can be finding interesting and different articles periodically. If you have anything unusual or interesting, particularly regarding sailing and holidays, places you visit and people you meet please consider writing an article for the "Reach".

(Editor's Note: This article was submitted for last year's Reach and Freedom has since been bought by the club for training.)

Christmas is coming.....

John Green recommends the website lodestarbooks.com for some good reprints of out of print sailing books.

During lockdown, we had to do virtual Knowledge and Nosh, so I thought of giving a talk on Celestial Navigation, a skill I had gained many years ago, when I went sailing to Spain, and then across the Atlantic and Pacific.

I had been working in London Yacht Centre, and could get the yachting magazines before anyone else, so that I could be the first to answer the ads for crew.

I signed on as deckhand on a scaled-down Baltimore Fishing Schooner, 42 foot, with 2 masts. We sailed from Yarmouth, Isle of Wight to Denia, Spain, crossing the Bay of Biscay on the way, with a brisk wind. A racing pigeon became tired of his race, and joined us for a couple of days, starting off shyly sitting on the dinghy in davits off the stern, then gradually, after being fed, sitting next to the helmsman and trying to push him/her off the seat and demanding food.

After we arrived in Denia in August, the owner asked me to re-join the Schooner, named Active, in November, so that we could cross the Atlantic, sailing to Martinique for Christmas. He also asked me to learn Celestial Navigation so that I could be a spare navigator for the Atlantic crossing, because he was recovering from cancer, and might have some health problems.

I took a couple of crewing jobs, to the Balearic Islands, then on a small British sloop to Ischia, then hitch-hiked to Cannes, where I helped to maintain a fancy motor yacht. A tip for hitch-hiking in Italy, at least in those days: stop in the fastest piece of road possible, to provide a challenge for cars to stop! In Cannes, I had bread, camembert and wine for lunch every day, and stayed in a small apartment run by a lecherous old man, who chased me round the table sometimes. Luckily, I could run faster than him!

I learnt Navigation in the evenings, from the famous book by Mary Blewitt, "Celestial Navigation for Yachtsmen".

In November, I hitch-hiked back to Denia, and the yacht Active, and we sailed off to Gibraltar, where the cook and I learnt to make bread in a Dutch oven, so that we could bake bread while crossing the Atlantic. This was a good skill to have!

At that time, a Baltic Trading Barge sailed between Morocco and Gibraltar, bringing fruit and vegetables to Gibraltar. We stocked up with fresh and canned food for our voyage. The cupboards were full!

We sailed from Gibraltar to Tenerife in the Canaries, then down to Martinique.

For the voyage from Canaries to Martinique, we had 15 gallons of water for each crew member, so we had to be quite sparing on water, and used sea water for washing, rinsing off with a cup of fresh water.

There were 3 of us taking watches, in rotation. The watches were midnight to 4, 4 to 8, 8 to noon, noon to 4, 4 to 6 (dogwatch, so that the watches would rotate), and 6 to 8, another dogwatch, then 8 to midnight. The 4th person was the cook, an American girl called Barbara.

I took a noon sight each day, using my Ebbco sextant. The owner also took sights with a brass sextant, and I did calculations from those as well. We had 2 chronometers, and we checked them against each other and against the time pip from WWV. This gave us our time for the sight.

We took a morning, noon and afternoon sight.

To get a noon position, we advanced the morning line (perpendicular to the line of your sighting of the sun, so a North-East to South-West line, roughly) along our course and crossed it with our noon latitude.

For the afternoon position, we advanced the noon line along our course, and crossed it with our afternoon line.

We used the Nautical Almanac, and the Sight Reduction Tables (Air Navigation tables, Pub No. 249).

If there was good visibility, we would take our star sights at nautical twilight, about 20 minutes after sunset, when the stars and horizon are both visible.

Pub249, volume 1, gives you tables of information about where to find the most useful stars from your current position.

After using the altitude, time and tables, to make your calculations, you draw a line of position for each star.

Ideally, you would then have a small triangle and your position is in that triangle! If you make mistakes, the triangle is very big!

In my talk, I explained how to find a latitude at noon.

For anyone who would like to have the power point presentation, I can email it to them.

My email is caroline8008@gmail.com if you would like to request a copy of the presentation.

Chris Price Remembered

Roy Turner

Chris Price, who died recently, was a long-term member of the club, whose sailing “claim to fame” at least as far as GSC is concerned, was an extraordinary single-handed trip. Some years back, having built the steel boat he lived on in recent years, he decided to buy a Contessa 34, which just happened to be in Durban, South Africa. He sailed her round the Cape and up the Atlantic to the Azores, where he stayed for nearly two years and then sailed her home, this time without the benefit of a working engine.

Chris was a reclusive man who was virtually unknown by most members, but was always up for doing jobs around the club despite deteriorating health. Those who did know him will miss his ironic humour and breadth of knowledge.



Gravesend Sailing Club

Safety Boat Emergency Checklists

On Shore Preparation

1. **Check safety boat equipment including kill cord and fuel**

The equipment is listed in the safety boat log books, found in the race box. It's worth checking equipment that isn't used often. For example, check the anchor warp is ready to go!
Remember to complete the log book!

2. **Establish number of boats to be covered**

3. **Establish whether any commercial traffic is likely.**

The race officer should know this, or the PLA regularly broadcast.

4. **Review the course or sailing area.**

The race officer will set a race course.

If you're covering a training course, confirm the sailing area with the senior instructor.

If you're training, confirm with the senior instructor that if "one boat capsizes all others head in".

5. **Identify likely risky areas**

Commercial traffic (in the shipping lane)

Uptide of moored barges

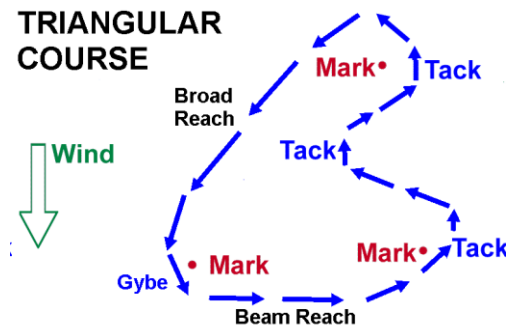
Downtide hazards (jetties, pontoons, landings)

Capsize risks:

Gybe mark (especially during training)

The run

Spinnaker / asymmetric setting



Risky Characteristics: Newbies - may not appreciate the dangers
Old Hands - may be over confident

On the Water

1. **Wearing the kill cord properly is mandatory**

2. **Keep counting boats, and know where they are**

3. **Position carefully**

Position the safety boat so as not to impede or confuse other vessels, but be able to respond to the most likely situations quickly, according to your hazard identification.

4. **Keep identifying and counting the boats.**

5. **Constantly and dynamically assess the risks.**

6. **Be prepared mentally and physically to assist a vessel**

Towing a sailing boat

Astern Tow - often easier

1. **Ask boat to set sails in "heave to" position**
Heave to position - boat is head to wind, with the jib backed (on the wrong side), main flapping, and tiller hard to windward.
2. **Stand off to windward of the sailing vessel and gently approach**
3. **Secure safety boat to sailing boat**
Have **at least one turn** of their painter around your towing post
i.e. don't try to hold the line directly or it will give you rope burns, sore arms, pull you overboard or you'll drop the line.

Or

Throw them a line and ask them to take two turns around the mast

4. **Prepare sailing boat to be towed:**
Mostly **raise centreboard** (leave a small bit down for stability)
Lower both sails
Ensure **crew sitting down** or as low as possible
5. **Ask rescued boat to steer to your middle**
If rescued boat is disabled, tow alongside
6. If towing downwind and towed boat keeps overtaking you, consider asking them to **tow a bucket** to slow them down.

Alongside Tow - (preference if boat "disabled" e.g. with no rudder)

As above

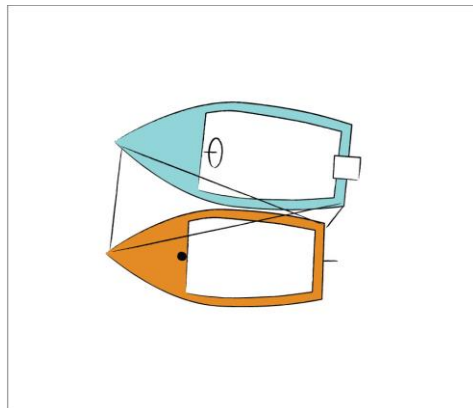
Secure yourself to the casualty vessel

Adjust to ensure your **engine is behind** their stern

Tie with a **fore and aft** spring line

Use **fenders**

Do NOT tow for any distance by trying to hold the shroud or boat edge.



Capsized Boat

1. Approach carefully from **upwind** - there will be lots of trailing lines
(Approach with the capsized vessel downwind of you)
2. **Check crew are all right**

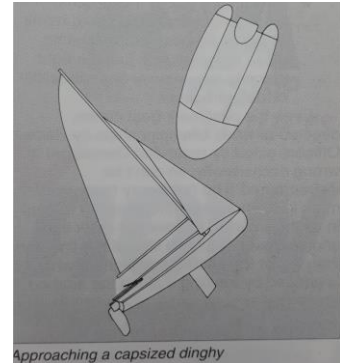
If crew not all right:

Rescue crew
Transport crew to shore
Arrange medical help en-route if needed
(via coastguard / telephone to club)
Inform PLA crew of boat are safe via VHF
Return to casualty boat as soon as appropriate
Retrieve or secure casualty boat

If crew all right:

Monitor crew for signs of hypothermia and fatigue
Approach boat from thirty degree angle of bow
Offer assistance

Be prepared to leave the capsized boat



Non-inverted dinghy

Choose one of the following approaches at once - do NOT use a combination of them all.

1. **Safety boat crew enter the water and assist**
If suitably attired, trained and willing.
or
2. **Shroud method**
Retrieve capsized vessel crew.
Tie a line to the uppermost shroud
Gently pull away at 90 degrees to the casualty vessel.
or
3. **Centreboard Assistance**
Come alongside the hull of the boat, and help push on the centre board. Not suitable for mirror dinghies - daggerboard likely to snap
or
4. **Grab the painter, and tow the boat round in slow circles**
or
5. **Approach from the bow, and "walk up" the forestay**
Grab hold of the forestay. Gradually move up the forestay, pulling the boat up as you go.

Inverted dinghy

The **shroud method**, as above.

If boat capsizes after righting, dinghy or safety crew may have to enter the water to **release the halyards & lower sails** to prevent further capsize.

Person Overboard

Keep **eyes on** the casualty
Consider **alerting PLA** via a Mayday call
Gear in **neutral** as you approach

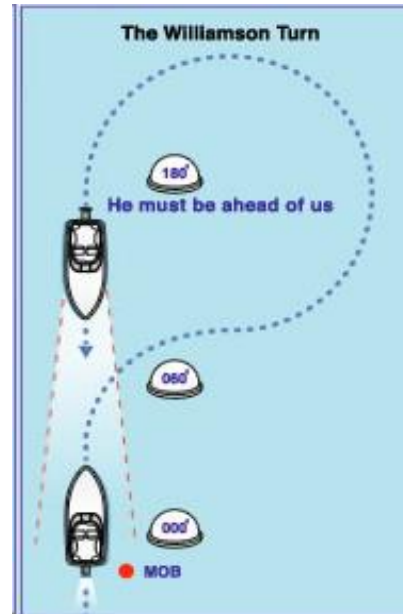
Assist the person in to the safety boat by:
Deploying the safety boat ladders

or

Use a bowline loop over the side as a foothold

or

Grab their buoyancy aid, push down (great in theory), then as float up bounce them in.



they

(On a RIB, partially deflating a tube may be an option)

These checklists are not intended to replace training but are to provide a discussion point.

If you spot any corrections or potential additions, please speak to the training principal.

They are designed to act as an aid in an emergency, when rational thinking may be lost. They are summarised from the RYA Safety Boat handbook and experience. For further reading ... please attend a safety boat course, and then read the handbook!

If you need safety boat training, please speak to the training co-ordinator.

Why not practice with the checklists to aid familiarity?

Copies in club library, one first edition, published in 1885, donated to the club by Capt. Flower in 1911 and a modern reprint in the lending part of the library, donated by Chris Steer.

“As becomes one of the oldest ports in the kingdom, Gravesend – it was called Grapesham in Domesday Book – is a town of narrow streets, of quaint shops and houses, of old-fashioned inns and close courts and alleys. The face which it turns to the river is like that of a battered old sailor – scarred, sun-beaten, weather-worn, but pleasant and honest withal. As in most sea-faring towns, there is one long, cramped street, in which the houses seem to elbow each other, running, a little back from the river, almost from end to end! Far as it is removed from the sea, there is a fine salt water savour about Gravesend, and it has also the recommendation of being situated in a pleasant country, for, after ascending its steep streets and threading here and there a leafy lane, there bursts upon the sight a glorious stretch of agricultural land, beautifully uneven, with hills of gentle slope, and occasional patches of woodland and garden and copse.”

“A breezy, stirring place is Gravesend Reach, enthralling at all hours and in all weathers, stormy sometimes, sometimes as calm as a lake on a windless night, but most beautiful on grey, uncertain days, when the light shivers downward through flying clouds, and breaks and sparkles on tumbling crests of waves; when the ships at anchor sway hither and thither on the turbulent waters, and make with their masts and cordage a continuous and confused movement against the sky; when the barges coming up from the Medway tear and strain under their canvas like horses impatient of the bit; when the half furlled sail flaps and battles in the wind, and the sea-birds, now darting to the water, now leaping towards the flying clouds, seem to be driven about against their will. Gravesend Reach where David Copperfield said adieu to Mr Peggoty and Mrs Gummidge, where little Em’ly waved her last farewell, where we lost sight of Mr Micawber and the twins, where so many tears have been shed, and so many hearts have seemed to be broken! What a ceaseless current of commerce flows through it, inward to the mightiest of European cities, outward to every country that the sun shines on. Whither is bound the vessel that is unfurling its sails yonder? Whither! To far Cathay, it may be; to obscure ports on the furthest verges of the world.”

You won't need me to tell you that the club has faced some challenges this year but, despite all Covid has thrown up, we've been trying to run at least some of our regular activities, including a series of Dinghy Races. While the series was shorter than usual we've been lucky enough to enjoy some good racing, including perhaps the closest Gravesend Sailing Club dinghy competition for some years.

Dinghy Race 2 took place on Sunday 6 September, which was a warm sunny day with a decent westerly blowing around F3. Start time was set for 14:00 and by 12:30 we had three crewed Dayboats ready to take part – Steve and Penny Davies in Widgeon, Richard and Debbie Twyman in Hazy Daze, and Karen and me in Emma. We had a course set by Roy Turner and safety boat manned by Paul Robbins and Jeff Keys.

We also had some recently-joined club members come along (optimistically expecting to see some real race action, no doubt!) Kaye Walker was tempted away for a cruiser sail and Beril Tutuncuoglu joined Paul and Jeff on safety duty. But Andy Barnes – you may have seen some of his action photos recently – was keen to get into a dinghy. Keen enough, at least, to set Penny planning – we just needed one more boat and one more person.

A phone call back to Davies-Mullan HQ had John on his way from Snodland to jump into recently-acquired Ozone Friendly, which Steve Davies was readying while Penny juggled the crews. She decided to helm Widgeon with Debbie, Richard took Andy to crew Hazy Daze, Steve was joined by John in Ozone Friendly, and Karen and I crewed Emma. That put an experienced helm in all but the last of the four boats!



John arrived with minutes to spare and Ozone Friendly defied expectations to make it to the start line in time. Roy had set a good course with plenty of scope to make – or lose – ground depending on how well tacks and reaches were planned. But over the first three laps no-one managed to capitalise on those opportunities – the lead changed two or three times each lap but the 10 or 20m stretches of clear water won up river disappeared just as quickly on the downriver run back through the moorings.

On the third downwind run all four boats were still really close with three – Hazy Daze, Widgeon and Emma – just a boom's length apart. Time for the inevitable debate over who had (or looked like they may have) clear water at the next mark! I'm not sure if that's the most appropriate situation to try to pick up the details of RYA racing protocol and penalties but no contact was made between boats, marks or competitors, which is probably a positive.

As said earlier, the course was always going to reward those that chose the best points to tack and, in the way of sailing, the 'nip and tuck' finally gave way to a clear lead on lap four for Richard and Andy in Hazy Daze. That lead, though, was to be lost to confusion. Thinking it was the final lap, Hazy Daze, Widgeon and Emma tacked in towards the line; Ozone Friendly, meanwhile, made off out into the river to position themselves for the next mark. By the time the error was realised the lead had been taken by those able to count to five! The final result saw Ozone Friendly take the line first, followed by Widgeon and Hazy Daze, then Karen and me in Emma.

Now many of you will know that Karen and I usually come in at the back of the field, so we were kicking ourselves that the first race where we looked anywhere near competitive saw us slip back to last place due to a counting mistake. But, that's sailing. And, of course, it's not the winning that counts (so they say). At the end of the day, it was a race to remember – fun, fair and really close. Thanks to all that helped and participated and we're looking forward to equally entertaining, or even better, GSC sailing in a (hopefully) less Covid-impacted 2021.

(Editor's note: The excellent picture of Emma was actually taken by Andy Barnes on 20th September. I used a bit of journalistic licence.)

Plan a voyage from GSC to MYC and back and within the period between 18:00 on Friday evening 10th July 2020 and return to your compound bay or mooring at GSC by 22:00 on Sunday 12th July 2020.

It can be fictional - boat, crew, weather, and you can use any resources you wish to, Internet, Satellite Images, experience, Reeds Almanac, Charts Pilot books, me or other Club members, friends etc. etc.

Key points may include but not be limited to

- Times of enough water at GSC and MYC to get to your cruiser or launch / recover your dinghy
- Tide turn time at the Medway river entrance
- Alternative harbour / anchorage if something changes and means you have to take refuge / seek assistance
- Daylight Hours
- Pilotage notes

We received three excellent but very different submissions for this work from home virtual navigation exercise and it has been very difficult to judge. Many thanks to John Green, Beril Tutuncuoglu and Caroline Richardson for joining in the fun.

It also helped spur me into doing the job properly rather than the usual “seat of pants” approach. I learnt quite a few things – not least of which is that navigating the short cut to the north of Hoo Island could be quite fun at the right state of the tide and with a draft of 1.8m

So the awards as follows

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Most technically complete – | Caroline Richardson |
| Most ambitious (night Passage) | Beril Tutuncuoglu |
| Most amusing | John Green |

Prizes (yet to be decided by Sailing Committee but expected to be huge!) will be presented at our first Social event.

In the meantime and to add a bit of nautical cheer to this autumn here is a copy of the “Log Drifters” plan from John Green which I hope you enjoy.

Finding myself, as I do, without a boat, it has become apparent that this voyage will have to be undertaken using whatever means become available.

Fortunately, from time to time, large floating logs appear around high water at Gravesend and I fully expect one to have blown alongside the pontoon on the morning of Saturday 11th July 2020.

This then is the plan.

Depart HW 05:56. (Equipment to include provisions and such in waterproof backpack) oh and frogman flippers.

The distance to the grain spit being but 16 miles (sea), with a light westerly it will be accomplishable using the whole of the ebb.

From Grain Edge Buoy to MYC is ten miles so looking at the long distance forecast, or possibly Mystic Meg, I predict that the wind will likely go into the North East at exactly 11:04, conveniently the time of low water at Garrison Point.

Since there will be sufficient rise of tide I'll navigate to the North of Hoo Island and arrive alongside the MYC pontoon with plenty of time to change into a nice frock for the evening.

Should the conditions become inclement, safe refuges may be found on the way at the following locations viz.

The Canal Tavern, sorry chart correction, that should be The Punjabi Lounge, next the Ship and Lobster public bar, then The Lobster Smack Holehaven.

I shouldn't need to point out that in the words of the manual, reassembly is the reverse of the above and I'd expect to arrive back at Gravesend 18:43 on Sunday but I'm not saying which one.

I thought it could also be fun to invite contributors on board FOUR BELLS to put their plan into practice – couldn't happen this year of course but the offer still stands for as early as possible next season. Watch out for details on Whats App group and Newsletter

After sixty years of wind-propelled boating, we've become 'stink-pot' owners.



She's a Hardy Pilot 20 which we bought on the River Trent in July and very aptly named she is too.

Although the pleasure of being afloat remains unchanged, there are some features of up-river cruising that are entirely different from sailing from GSC.

Firstly, and although it may appear unimportant, fenders are left dangling at all times. This means that once you've got them tied on so they are just above the water, that's it. No more adjusting for height and, best of all, no need to find a place on board to stow them.

Another pleasant aspect of boating on the Upper Thames is that there is never any need to get going early in the morning. When HW at Gravesend is 10.00 or 11.00, raising the anchor at dawn from the bed of Stangate Creek in the pouring rain is something we won't miss. And you're not going to get stuck in a marina by the unseasonal adverse winds.

We also like being able, at the touch of a button, to raise the propeller from the water to examine it and free it from entanglement if necessary.



Mooring sites are plentiful and quiet and the pubs are welcoming and the sunsets rival Stangate's.

The locks are where the variety of river users meet. At only 20' long, we can usually squeeze in to a gap when most boats can't, so you find yourself in conversation with the occupants; usually narrow boaters, sometimes those in kayaks, rowers and of course other plastic boats. We came downriver with a pedal-powered craft, Moksha, whose crew told us they were planning to navigate around Britain next year, GB360. This was their trial run, travelling around Wales via the Kennet and Avon, Bristol Channel, along the Welsh coast, back inland at Liverpool and thence via canal back to Oxford. It takes all sorts! The couple take it in turns to pedal and they were moving pretty quickly as they passed us.

We've also shared locks with a group from the Guiding movement aboard their narrow boat, travelling from Newbury to Lechlade and back. A group of young canoeists, a mixed bunch of able and less able were making their way to a riverside campsite.

We're fortunate that our boat is able to travel through what we have heard described as the 'pratt filter'. This is Osney Bridge in Oxford which is only 7'6" high. Air draft keeps larger boats downriver.

So, where we were used to keeping away from ships and tugboats, now we need to maintain a proper look-out, this time to avoid swimmers and paddle boarders. There are navigation buoys along the upper Thames but we are still not convinced that everyone understands them. Try to explain the direction of the flood tide to a 70' canal boat owner at Lechlade!

When on board John occasionally awakes for the shipping forecast, but there doesn't appear to be a sea area anywhere near! So he just polishes the brass.



Apparently my parents are not "kid people". Despite this, just three days after the birth of Edward John Davies-Mullan, there was a dink about scheduled at the Club. Keen to share the celebration of their first grandchild, Penny and Steve Davies quickly announced their intention to pop some bubbles down at GSC for anyone who was around. A particularly poignant location, given that Edward is now the fourth generation of the Twyman-Davies family to be a member, and GSC is perhaps a key reason for the family at all; after all, my maternal grandmother Jean was apparently only interested in my grandad because he had a boat!

The Davies-Mullan clan managed to make it down, greeted by a proud grandfather waving a bottle of champagne at an equally chuffed glass-holding grandmother, popping the cork as soon as the brakes were applied on the pram. Edward was parked in the middle of a welcoming group of members and peered at from a safe distance (unfortunately the dreaded Coronavirus was affecting the usual handing around).



Pre-arrival I had mentioned to John that, subject to weather, I could well imagine there would be a queue formed of Steve, Penny and Richard, waiting to take Edward out for his first sail. I imagined arriving at the club to see Widgeon ready, a safety boat on duty, and Steve kitted up ready to go. I was not wrong. Following a mouthful of fizz, Edward's grandfather half-jokingly said 'so, up for a sail then?' I could see the eagerness and responded 'well, we did put his sling in, just in case...'

The magic words had been said and suddenly everything was happening. John was being wrapped up in the baby sling, Steve was readying Widgeon, and the safety boat crew was mobilised.

The best bit? We'd chosen a day where potential (now current) member Andy Barnes had come down and he just happened to be a professional photographer. Andy caught some great snaps both onshore and from the safety boat, apparently calling out positioning suggestions to the crew on board Widgeon, ensuring they were arranged for some fantastic photographs. Andy even managed to catch Steve smiling more than once! It's a shame he couldn't Photoshop out John's lockdown beard though. Edward slept through the whole thing so we assume he enjoyed it! The Davies-Twyman version of a Christening I think, with newspaper and RYA articles forming the 'birth announcement'.

Edward has since been sailing again, joining Four Bells on the end of season cruise going upriver to Greenhithe. As commented on board, all this sailing at a young age will ensure he becomes a Formula 1 racing driver instead!



<https://www.kentonline.co.uk/gravesend/news/tot-takes-to-the-water-232287/>

<https://www.rya.org.uk/newsevents/news/Pages/starting-them-young-at-gravesend-sailing-club.aspx>

Four brave, if foolhardy, skippers turned up to race in a strong east north easterly breeze. With a spring tide on the flood, sailing downriver would be more challenging than getting a covid-19 test! Consequently the commodore, who had kindly volunteered as race officer, shortened the course so there was a small chance of finishing before the pubs closed.

Silver Dolphin's nervous skipper was gently reassured that he could indeed survive the race after being reminded of the marvellously handy concept of reefing. Just Nimbus's skipper was feeling quietly confident knowing he benefited from having three fairly able crew, although admittedly most of them were sadly missing a variety of body parts between them.

Kadissa alone went for the full sail option and surprised everyone by not immediately raising her spinnaker, tea towel and

every other piece of material on board. Dayspring's experienced crew were hoping for a second win of the season but may have celebrated prematurely by opening a couple of beers before the race had even started. As they watched the other boats cross the club line in front of them they knew Dayspring would have to be put through her paces if they were to fulfil their ambitious aspirations.



Just Nimbus' spray-tanned skipper was soon confidently leading the fleet with no idea where he was going or at which point he should start heading back. Silver Dolphin, now so heavily reefed she could only just be described as a sailing yacht, miraculously passed Kadissa as they headed downwind towards Thurrock. Meanwhile, with all the cunning of Dominic Cummings northbound on the A2, Dayspring made good use of the

stronger tide on the south side of the river and moved into second place.



Having consulted various charts, some of which actually included parts of the UK, Just Nimbus made the upriver mark at Greenhithe in first place and pulled her sheets in tight in preparation for the beat back to Gravesend. Dayspring's skipper was relishing the challenge of testing his new yacht as he rounded the mark in second place with Just Nimbus in his sights. Still in shock from their early success, Silver Dolphin was relieved to see Kadissa just beat him to the mark. The race was on!

A lonely Just Nimbus surged ahead, eager to finish the race and enjoy the luxury that a thirty-two foot yacht affords, including a fridge to keep the chardonnay and hors d'oeuvres chilled.

Kadissa took off downwind and soon stole second place as her skipper hung off the side of the boat precariously, possibly confusing his vessel for a dinghy racing for gold at the Olympics.

As the PLA pleaded with the skippers to keep to starboard so they could squeeze as many ships as possible through the narrowest part of the Thames, tempers, technique and bursting bladders were tested to their limits. After tacking for what seemed like an eternity, Just Nimbus crossed the finish line in first place, followed by Kadissa, Dayspring and Silver Dolphin.

However, after the dark art of handicapping was applied, Kadissa leapt into pole position while Silver Dolphin succeeded in relegating Dayspring to last place.



Beers were served to exhausted crew as weary skippers described already exaggerated stories of their race to anyone who would listen. If only for a few hours the current national crisis had been forgotten in favour of the joys of sailing on the Thames.

(Pictures taken from finish line by Andy Barnes)

Voyage GSC – Beginning of Medway Approach – GSC dd 25th of October 2020

Skipper: Richard T with Steve and Beril as crew

Boats joining voyage are Four Bells and Just Nimbus.

We have left GSC at 9.30 am and we have opened Main sail and genoa.

Slight wave, gentle breeze and the visibility was good.

We have shortened the main sail a level when the wind speed increased.

There were 5 beacons at our port side at Tilbury.

We were careful and watched red buoy at starboard side.



We follow buoys on the slipway. We passed buoy called Ovens.

There was mud area at Cliffe at our starboard side. There were marks as danger and depth was low.

Hole Haven is at the port side which was recommended place for approaching and berthing.

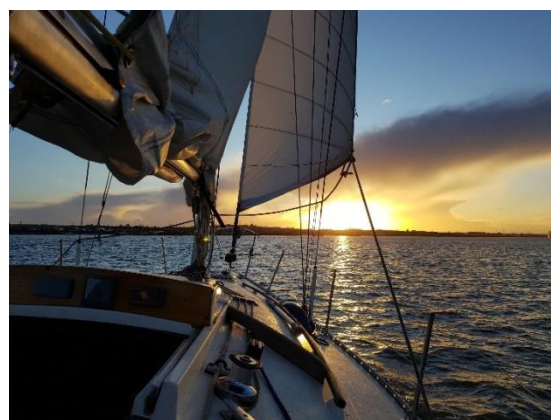
We have seen Southend Pier and then we continue on Swatch Way.



We have seen a big wreck and restricted area. We have turned back by following buoys at Channel at the entrance of Medway Approach.

We have sailed until Hole Haven and then we continued motor sailing until GSC and we have arrived at 6 pm.

It was a great route and day for sailing and was a great experience.



Do you remember Storm Ciara back in February?

