

Boat Safety

CARBON MONOXIDE

Sailing an 'Atmospheric River'

Rules and Regs

Tackling the Thames

Winter on the water

Two men in a boat

Ostende

Waves and Waffles

CLUB NEWS

Start of Season Updates

2026 Photo Competition

New Group MMSI

Editor's Note ...

Spring has definitely sprung and it gives me great pleasure as your new Editor to start the season with your new look magazine, which I sincerely hope you enjoy. Thanks to Mark for all your help handing over, both you and Sarah set a very high bar for me to follow.

I guess I was the obvious choice to take over the helm. Back in the dark ages (Freudian) I had a big career in the marketing world. In 2011 my life changed radically, and that's when I discovered the wonderful world of sailing. It's been a game changer for me: travelling beautiful places, full of amazing people and endless adventures. I'm so much happier having ditched the hairbrush, and trading the high heels and smart suits for a barefoot feral life of teak and sand!

I've tried to make your magazine fun, informative and interesting. Not a bumper issue this one, but please don't hesitate to feed back, good or bad. Thank you for all your support, and sending in your articles, without your input we don't have a magazine. I'm sure we all have a super exciting season on the horizon, so please keep sending over anything that made you laugh, cry or kept you afloat. Don't hold back with the ridiculous things that happen in boating life, we're all friends!

Jo



And from the Commodore himself - Stuart Robinson.

A warm welcome to you all, and my sincere thanks for your continued support in making SPYC a super embracing Club for all things 'sailing'. The sustained efforts and hard work behind the scenes has you, the members, at the very heart of continual progression as we strive for better and easier communication, and facilitating what matters to you. As you are aware, we hold quarterly Committee Meetings, with monthly 'Team' calls to keep us on track. Here is a round up of Club News to launch us into the 2026 season, but please never hesitate to voice what else you would like your Club to offer.



Fair winds, Stuart

Membership

SPYC are always on the look-out for new members. To increase awareness of our great Club, the front cover and Club News pages will be displayed in the Shipwreck cabinet, and a new initiative to furnish all berth holders at Shotley with a Club leaflet will be underway in the next month or so. We will also be seeking permission to enlighten boaters at both Levington and Pin Mill. Nigel, our Membership Secretary, has been keeping our [Facebook](#) page fresh and informative which is being really well received. If you have a piece of news you think we should share more widely then please let Nigel know.

Club Events

Helen is once again busy organising our full diary of [Club Events](#) for this season, thank you Helen. Planned events can be found on the website, we are always looking for volunteer hosts so please get in touch. It's always more fun to sail in the company of other boats, and members are encouraged of course, to organise additional independent cruises themselves. We suggest setting up boat specific WhatsApp groups for these. Please don't forget to furnish Jo with your adventures for inclusion into Crow's Nest. I am sure we are all looking forward to brighter days and catching up with friends. The first event of the year is 11th April: a gentle sail to Titchmarsh with fitting-out supper at Harbour Lights Restaurant. Be great to see you all.

Non Boat Owning 'Crewpool' Members

We currently have 10 crewpool members and encourage boat owners to include them where possible on Club events. Club days will be one day cruises this year, but with 'Drinks and Nibbles' afterwards to help further encourage camaraderie and involvement of all club members. Diana will coordinate boats and crew. Thanks Diana.

“I followed my heart ... It led me to a sailing life. Now I'm lost, sunburnt and out of snacks.”



Workshops

As always, huge gratitude to Tim for taking time to organise a host of invaluable tutorial workshops for members. Tim has kindly scheduled in another 'Night Sailing' event on 18th April, it's always surprising how buoyage lights become confusing in the dark! 'Duncan', our ever suffering life sized dummy, will be lending a hand (and various other body parts) in thought provoking procedures on how to actually get your MOB safely back on board on 17th May and 21st June. Please sign up through the [Events](#) page.

Quartermaster for Corner Office

This year we welcome Kevin King as Quartermaster, who is responsible for all things 'Corner Office', thank you Kevin. The variety of equipment available for temporary loan includes a plethora of tools and child life jackets. Please check the [current list](#) of equipment on the website and complete the 'Loan Sheet' in advance for Kevin. The key safe code was changed on 1st April which you should all have received, the Tower also has the key.

Shotley Marina

Whilst the committee don't act as liaison between the Yacht Club and the marina, we will try to keep you informed of key matters affecting your moorings and days on the water. The entrance channel was surveyed by Harwich Harbour Authority in February and dredged to 2 meters below chart datum the week before Easter, so hopefully we won't have to worry about coming unstuck, or stuck!!

Photographic Competition 2026

We all take some cracking photos, for your chance to win some super exciting prizes, simply pop them over to Stuart at commodore@shotleypointyc.org. Photos must be taken from a Club boat at an event during the 2026 season and related to anything boaty. Closing date 31st January 2027.



The Team

Stuart Robinson	Commodore
Helen Baker	Vice Commodore
Sue Armstrong	Secretary
Nigel Baker	Membership
Bill Wallace-King	Treasurer
Diana Johnson	Crewpool
Kevin King	Quartermaster
Paul Armstrong	IT
Tim Bultitude	Training
Jo Horobin	Crow's Nest

Email: ["role"@shotleypointyc.org](mailto:role@shotleypointyc.org)

Group MMSI Number: 023200084

SPYC have introduced a Group MMSI Number for our members. It is especially useful on long passages to make sure all is well with boats in the group. There is no reason why it can't be used on all club cruises to pass information. It is an additional number, not a replacement for your individual vessel's unique MMSI.

Program the Group MMSI into VHF Radios

1. **Access Menu:** Go to the **Menu > DSC Calls > DSC Set-up > Group** or **Address Book**.
2. **Enter Number:** Use the radio's rotary knob or keypad to enter the 9-digit number.
3. **Save:** Select 'Save' or 'Done' to store the number.

Using the Group MMSI

To Make a Call: Go to the DSC menu on your radio, select 'Group Call', select the saved group name/number, and select the channel (eg: CH 06, 08, 72, or 77 for inter-ship).

RADIO SCHEDULE PROCEDURE

1. A group call will be made by the Host (or elected) vessel every two hours. The first call will be made two hours after the agreed port departure time.
2. When the lead boat makes the call, every VHF that has the group MMSI programmed will sound an alarm.
3. On hearing the alarm, you will need to accept or acknowledge (depending on VHF model) the call. Your VHF will then automatically tune to the working channel the lead boat has chosen.
4. Now wait. Please don't attempt to call the lead boat.
5. The lead boat will wait 1 minute after the group call was made and will then broadcast their position.
6. The lead boat will then call each boat in turn. Boats will be called in alphabetical order.
7. When your boat is called, you can reply with your position and any other information you wish to share.
8. If a boat does not answer, the lead boat will say "Nothing Heard" and move on to the next boat.
9. At the end of the boat list, if you have heard a transmission from a boat that the lead boat didn't hear, please call the lead boat and relay any information.
10. The lead boat will then close the schedule.

NOTE – Any boat can broadcast a group call, so if you want to contact the whole group, set up the call on your VHF according to the manufacturer's instructions. When the call has been sent, the boat initiating the call should speak first.

Contact Tim for any questions: training@shotleypointyc.org

Gas on board a boat! A short tale of two recent events ...

We are all aware of the gas dangers on board and the need to isolate the supply when not in use, and to keep a check on hoses, fittings etc. I always try to think about this, sometimes though, the risk is unknown.

Event one was by my own admission 'careless', and when my carbon monoxide alarm went off I was happily snoozing away without a care in the world. The diesel heater was keeping me warm, but the exhaust pipe, nicely wrapped in insulation between the heater and outlet had been corroding for some time and come adrift. I had not checked the condition of the pipe itself under the insulation, and the exhaust was now pumping fully into the boat!! After switching off the heater, venting the boat, and some bleary eyed investigation, thankfully I found the issue.

I had been suffering from headaches on recent trips and visits to the boat when it may have been leaking only slightly. Life threatening is not an understatement. Please please regularly check your heater exhaust!

The second event was in January this year and even more of a strange one. The gas was off, the diesel heater was off but the carbon monoxide alarm in the saloon still burst into life. Damn it!! Where else is there gas on board?? On Tim's advice after the last issue, in addition to the saloon alarm, I installed another CO alarm in the storage locker where the diesel heater is. 'The Garage' for those who know the layout of my boat.

The saloon alarm had gone off in the evening. No signs of anything wrong. False alarm? I set about investigating all parts of the boat and found nothing. Reset the alarm and moved on. In the early hours both the 'garage' alarm and saloon alarm went off. Definitely not a false alarm then!! I vented the boat fully and went about more investigation. Bilge pump on and all hatches open, confused and flipping freezing!

So what other gas is on board your boat? I couldn't identify anything, so why did the alarms go off? It was a quiet night and the only thing I found was a noise, not loud, and then eventually a slight sulphur smell in 'the garage'. **The culprit was the house battery.** It was quietly fizzing away releasing gas from the breather and was also very hot!

Head torch on, I quickly isolated the batteries, disconnected the cables and the house battery in the battery box. Very carefully I took the house battery down the ladder and onto the hard, well away from cars and other boats where the petulant fizzing lump eventually calmed down and cooled down.

The battery was causing excessive gassing of hydrogen, hence the activation of the CO alarms. I have to say, checking the house battery wasn't something on my radar as a potential gas escape risk, even though a battery test was on my list of winter jobs.

What is not in doubt, is the value of Carbon Monoxide detectors!

Boat Safety Scheme Guidance

A build-up of carbon monoxide can happen in a number of ways: through faulty equipment, exhaust fumes from an engine or generator, escaped flue gases from solid fuel stoves or lack of adequate ventilation.

Carbon monoxide (CO) alarms on boats typically use electrochemical sensors which can also be activated by other gases found in marine environments.

Hydrogen (Battery 'Gassing')

Lead-acid batteries when overcharged, near end of life, or with faulty charge controllers can produce hydrogen gas, which can trigger a CO detector.

Alcohol-Based Products

Paint removers, alcohol-based cleaning products, and methyl hydrate can cause false, but potentially critical alarms.

Aerosol Propellants

Many aerosols use propane or butane which can trigger the sensor.

Adjacent Exhausts

Fumes from a neighbouring boat's engine or generator can drift into your living spaces setting off your alarm.

Know the danger signs on your boat

- Burners with yellow or orange rather than blue flames.
- Soot or yellow/brown staining around or on appliances or it's flue.
- Appliances that are difficult to light and keep lit.
- Increased condensation inside windows.
- Smell of exhaust fumes or sulphur inside the cockpit or cabins.

For the best protection install alarms certified to BS EN 50291-2.

CO detectors are essential for boat safety, but never let an alarm be a substitute for operational checks and maintenance of appliances, engines, etc.

www.rya.org.uk/water-safety/carbon-monoxide-safety/carbon-monoxide/
www.boatsafetyScheme.org/



The rain in Spain most definitely does not fall mainly on the plain!

2000 days of grey wet January 2026 and I was desperate to escape the UK and go sailing (no change there then!). I'd felt the same the previous January, and decided Fuerteventura was the obvious choice for warm, windy sailing. With no crewing opportunities available, I found a sailing school and did my Day Skipper Plus there, and I'm so glad I did. It was a great way to tighten up and develop my skills in the sunshine, and with Tom as my instructor I had the best week ever. I learned so much from him and laughed non-stop.



Tom is one of life's very rare 'made of gold' people, the kind you feel blessed to have encountered. He lives in Baiona, Galicia, north-west Spain which I knew nothing about until I met him. He ignited my imagination telling me of magical hamlets, stunning scenery, and the rugged Atlantic coastline scattered with remote mystical islands. The reason he had chosen to base both himself and his boat there. Sensible chap!

I wanted to learn more from him, I wanted to go to Galicia, and wanted to escape the UK gloom without delay. I had never planned to do Coastal Skipper but Tom let me know he was running a course in Galicia in 3 weeks time, so very excitedly with all boxes ticked, I booked flights and off I went.



I was watching the weather a few days before I went, basically to decide what to pack. Oh crickey, I discovered Storm Leonardo was barreling across the Atlantic, causing absolute chaos and devastation to southern Spain. There were red alerts everywhere due to torrential rain, very high winds and dangerous seas. Morocco evacuated 150,000 people; Ceuta was cut off by the sea; Gibraltar Strait was closed to Commercial vessels. Spain was under water with 1000's of evacuations, main roads destroyed by landslides and numerous dams near overflowing.

“Sailboats are vital for survival ...

Dinosaurs didn't have them, and look how that turned out.



I was selfishly optimistic Storm Leonardo would disperse before my Coastal Skipper Course the following week. However, the Jet Stream and atmospheric river had other plans - I had no idea what was in store, no one did! This was to be a weather phenomenon not seen for 30 years and described by meteorologists as 'hydrologically absurd'. Very eloquent.

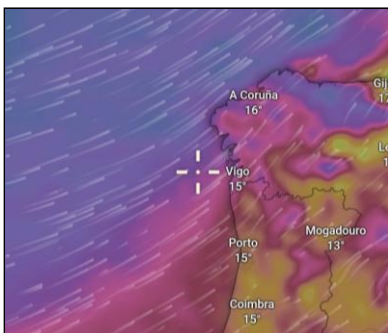
The river of storms was gradually moving northwards taking northern Spain, Portugal, Galicia and then France in its path. Storm Leonardo was immediately followed by Marta (the day before I arrived), then Nils, and Oriana came in on the last day of my course. Costa da Morte (wtf!!), Galicia is one of the most exposed coastlines in all of Europe. Concurrent storms with absolutely no let up from torrential rain, constant F6 winds gusting over 40kts, 3-4m seas inshore and anything up to 10m offshore. It wasn't cold though lol.



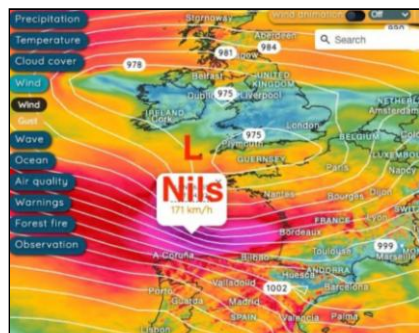
The boat was in beautiful Baiona, start of the Camino de Santiago trail and a few miles south of Vigo. Normally the perfect location for offshore Atlantic sailing, and if needed, more sheltered conditions in the Rias Baixas. The constant wind, waves and rain was insane and we never saw another yacht all week....cant imagine why! Sadly with low visibility I didnt get to appreciate the region in all her glory. We did manage to anchor at Isla Cies, these islands are part of a nature reserve featuring world-class beaches with white sand and turquoise waters ... apparently! I will definitely be back.

When 10m offshore seas seemed like a bad idea, we opted for a more serene 2m in the Rias. It was comical really, like the wind could see we were the only yacht to play with. All week she watched us position to moor up, watched us line up perfectly for MOB rescue under sail in 25kts, then laughed in our faces shooting 30knts from an entirely different direction. Sorry 'Brenda the Fender' we will be back!! Out at sea, F6/7 wind direction and massive wave angles changed every five minutes it seemed. Flippin eck, cheers wind....we got quicker at rigging preventers and CTS turbo boost quick thinking!!

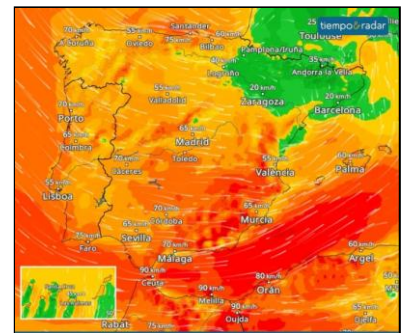
There were just 3 of us on 'Nemo' a beautiful Jeanneau 43, and I kept telling myself that the atrocious weather was actually a good thing as Coastal Skipper is all about good decision making and manoeuvres in adverse conditions (and tried to forget I'd paid for it!). I am not going to deny it was a tough, exhausting week of at least 7 hours a day sailing with minimal reefing, but it had been a good while since I'd been doing regular blue-sea 'rufty tufty' stuff, and I absolutely loved it. 'Still smiling' became the mantra of the week. Knackered and a bit battered I passed. Its clear from the picture, that Tom is literally holding up a very happy, relieved and exhausted Joanna!!



Leonardo - 2nd February



Nils - 5th February



Oriana - 10th February

When I returned home I was intrigued as to what was actually happening. From the start of January to mid February 2026, ten consecutive high impact storms had swept across the Atlantic, that's one every four or five days. My good friend 'Google' revealed Storm Goretta kicked off on January 6th, quickly followed by Harry, Ingrid, Joseph and then Kristin on 27th January. Storm Kristin was the product of two Atlantic storms fusing together, which created a rare 'jet sting' phenomenon which brought the huge winds and rain to Spain. But that had just been the warm up act for Leonardo!

On February 2nd, Storm Leonardo as well as virtually sinking Granada, sent flood waters through central Malaga, caused Seville's protective flood gates to close for only the second time in history, and absolutely hammered the Costa del Sol. 78 inches/2 metres of rain had fallen in parts of Spain in just 20 days!! I discovered the estimated damage from Leonardo to southern Spain alone was €4 billion, not taking into account the long term decimation of crops, industry, etc....or the compounded effects storms Marta, Nils and Oriana would bring in the next week.

It was the most extreme weather phenomenon to hit western Europe in 30 years caused by a persistent blocking anticyclone over Greenland and Scandinavia. Normally, Atlantic storms track towards the British Isles, this time the high pressure system acted like a barrier, diverting weather systems directly towards Spain, Portugal and France. At the same time, the Azores High, which usually helps stabilise Spain's weather, shifted further south, effectively creating a corridor for extreme storms to roll in one after another.

Atmospheric rivers are the elongated, narrow corridors of concentrated moisture in the atmosphere often accompanied with explosive extratropical cyclones covering hundreds of miles of ocean. The extratropical cyclone is the storm, while the atmospheric river is the intense plume of moisture that feeds the storm, resulting in heavy rainfall and very high winds.

It sounds grim, but we kind of got used to it and it didn't seem to matter on the water in the end. I had a great time doing what I love, learned a load and enjoyed every minute (well, most minutes) with a big smile. Thanks Tom!

There once was a time, before I got into cruising, that I raced through the winter in various catamarans. Ahh! The joys of breaking ice on the cover, dealing with semi frozen lines, and discovering that snow showers were actually brilliant for spotting wind shifts. For some years the dinghy season ended in October, and as for my yacht 'Jester', she was tucked up under her winter cover. I spent those winters taking Anne out to Sunday lunches and earning brownie points for my summer absences.

This year though has been different ...

Towards the end of last summer, I reached the conclusion that sailing dinghies at my home club 'Gorleston and Yarmouth Sailing Club' was getting too tough for a man of my years. The development of Great Yarmouth Outer Harbour meant that the beach was enlarging, and the shallow water meant we were often launching and recovering in substantial surf. Once through the waves, the sailing was brilliant but it was exhausting – especially as the club ran three 45-minute races back to back! The obvious place to sail instead was 'Rollesby Broad Sailing Club' as about half of the Gorleston Club were RBSC members.

At the same time, my next-door neighbour Gareth, who had sold his cruiser a year or so ago was rashly campaigning an RS Aero and finding it tough going. (Think of a Laser on speed). He had been a very competitive sailor in his youth in 505s, 707s and Contenders and then raced offshore and cruised extensively. We had chatted several times about racing a Wayfarer together at Rollesby, where the strong winter fleet is headed by Mike Macnamara, multi world champion in Wayfarers and Ospreys and other classes. *(In passing, look up his talk at the RYA Dinghy Show on how to set up your boat – very relevant for cruisers too).*

Anyway, our chats never seemed to go anywhere until Gareth spotted a Wayfarer for sale in Exeter, excitedly he said he would take a look on his next trip down that way. Next thing I knew, we were the joint owners of Wayfarer 11167, *What a Ripper* - a rather smart Hartley Mk 4 Wayfarer.



Most sailors have sailed a Wayfarer at some point, as they were widely used in sailing schools. My memory was that they had very simple controls so it was a bit of a shock to look at the mass of control lines in the boat. (Still not sure what the black and white one does!). We had a fun morning putting the boat together and luckily Mike Mac was passing - he kindly corrected a few of our worst errors and we were ready to go.



After discussion, we decide I would crew and Gareth would helm. This was based on our relative mobility: as any crew knows, the helm's role is to sit on the side and look decorative shouting instructions, while the crew bobs about getting bruised.

We are slowly getting to know the boat and our results are improving. I think we'd do a lot better if the helm managed to stay on the right side of the start line and not sail to the wrong buoys; and the helm thinks it would be handy if my spinnaker handling was better!

Actually, we are having great fun and having sailed single handers since 2001, I had forgotten how much fun two-man sailing is, particularly in a very competitive one design fleet. We have agreed to do the Nationals at the end of June!

“ You can't buy happiness ... But you can buy a sailboat and that's basically the same thing.

I still have a few reservations about winter sailing. First, RBSC does not have a heated changing room so we arrive in our dry suits. Secondly, putting on the jib requires threading a small ring through the pin which is really annoying with frozen fingers. Thirdly, the water is cold! As in our one capsize, I discovered that I had not quite closed the zip and cold water started to trickle down my legs. Yuk!

Still, these are minor complaints and hopefully we will have a few more years in dinghies before we have to come ashore for good. Gareth and I have 149 years between us, but considering Mike Mac won his last world championship at the age of 83, that gives us a few years yet!!

As thoughts turn to the season ahead and the eager anticipation to cast off into the wide blue yonder once more, James' lovely account of his part in Summer Cruise 2025 may well wet your appetites to reboot Navionics.

Time constraints sadly didn't allow for Jameel and I to join the whole cruise to France and Belgium last summer, but not wanting to miss out completely, we sailed straight to Ostende hoping to meet up and return with the Club fleet. This would be my first North Sea crossing in Koru, and Jameel's longest sail and first full night at sea.

I aimed to arrive in daylight, so followed the advice of the North Sea Pilot to depart Harwich HW+ 2hrs on Wednesday night June 4th. I chose the Wednesday to take advantage of a brief weather window in the persistent strong winds, often over 30kts. We set off at 22.30 with two reefs in the main and rounded 'Harwich corner' into a SW 20kt wind. We sailed toward Landguard then unfurled a little genoa for balance as we rounded the mark. Jameel helmed on a broad reach to Cork Sand NCM in 18kts. Despite being heavily reefed we made over 5kts and layed the mark just before midnight.

I took over the helm on a beam reach. Our speed went up and the heavy rolling sea coming up on the beam gave us a few dunkings and kept me busy. The wind had got up to 20-23kts, gusting 25. We were constantly 6kts and often over 7kts. We swapped roles off Long Sand Head but as Jameel took the helm he said he was struggling and felt seasick, so we swapped back again, and in the end I suggested he go below and lie on the mid cabin sole. That was around 01.30 and what had been an hour and a half on the helm from Cork Sand NCM turned into what would become my 12 hour watch on the helm to Ostende.

Oddly, as the depth exceeded 20m an alarm went off on the chart plotter, announcing that the depth had exceeded the depth range of the anchoring alarm. There was nothing in the plotter menus to change it, so I could only silence it with the 'OK' button. It was going off every time the depth changed by 0.2 of a metre, so in the end I would leave it on until I got sick of it then hit 'OK'.

Wind against tide made for such uncomfortable lumpy seas that the auto-helm struggled to cope, and it's constant movement would have eventually flattened the house battery. I was blessing Koru and giving thanks that I had a

wheel and not a tiller as I sailed through the night. We made it into the wide TSS with several ships appearing on the plotter. With the wet touch screen not responding to my wet fingers, I had to rely on traditional 'Mk1 Eyeball' methods to interpret what I could see onscreen. *And the anchor alarm triggered relentlessly...*

Despite sailing consistently at around 7kts, it seemed to take an age to cross the first lane of the TSS through the constant stream of ships. I managed to slip between several of them and we finally made it into the separation

zone where I could relax a bit. Thankfully, there were only a few ships coming up from the south-west in the second lane, and they presented no problems.

Towards West Hinder it started raining, all I could do was hunker down and hope the rain would at least wash some of the salt from my oilies, the deck and the canvas. We arrived at our turning waypoint below West Hinder at 08.00 still on starboard tack from Harwich. I furled the genoa as we turned east, and with

the wind behind and speed dropping, could finally start the engine and run on auto-helm. At last I was able to sit and

ease the pain in my left leg which had taken all my weight while heeled to port for the eight hours since Cork Sands. Now I could also leave the wheel to check on Jameel and get some water and a snack. *And the anchor alarm triggered relentlessly...*

We steamed past the North Cardinals marking the shipping channel to MBN where we turned SE towards Ostende. This took us into shallower water and finally the anchor alarm

ceased to trigger ... *blessed be the silence*. I dropped the main along the beach outside the harbour and set up lines and fenders. Jameel emerged gingerly from below looking pale and frail but beginning to recover. I really felt for him, he'd been through a terrible ordeal.

We motored into the harbour and coned our way through the various branches towards the Royal Yacht Club of Ostende (RYCO), only to be delayed by a large bulk carrier loading sand or gravel from a pier opposite the marina. Half an hour later the ship finally reversed out of its berth and down the harbour. We started searching for a berth in the marina when Paul Crane from Jacaranda waved and directed us into a snug berth in front of the yacht club. Helen and Nigel joined him to take our lines. Perfect.

After 14 hours we had made it!



After a shower and some rest following our arrival in Ostende on Thursday 5th June, we joined the gang for convivial drinks and nibbles aboard Fuzzy Duck. Most were eating in the Yacht Club, but we had to get into the city centre to check in with Immigration and get our passports stamped, so we dined in town. Jameel had made a Basque cheesecake which we enjoyed back onboard, a good sign that he was on the mend.

On the Friday, Jameel and I took the App-guided walking tour of the famous city murals which the Council had commissioned by artists from all over the world. There were some fascinating murals but four in particular stood out.

I was also delighted to see how they were preserving the façades of old buildings while building a new one around or inside the façade, though some turned out better than others. On the way around, we enjoyed a slice of Belgium's notoriously wonderful apple pie, with some very nice coffee. We then ended the day with some Belgian beer and a steak supper. Jameel had definitely recovered!

Several boats had left for home on the Friday, so we took the train to Bruges on Saturday, as had those aboard Echoes. It was very busy and we didn't have much time, so we walked north from the main square as far as the canal. We then took a clockwise circuit following the canal, passing some wonderful architecture to end at the Half Moon Brewery, home to Bruges well known Zot beer and its lesser known Straffe Hendrick (Strong Henry). We enjoyed the SH Trippel with a croquette lunch before heading back by bus and train. Later we joined the crews from Echoes and Jacaranda for a very sociable and delicious dinner in the Yacht Club, a very good way to spend our final night in Ostende.



Sunday found us checking out before our last chance to have some Belgian waffles with a very nice lunch. We then prepared Koru for departure at 18.00 before getting a couple of hours rest. The crews from Echoes and Jacaranda were on hand to help us slip lines and wave us away. We hoisted the main in the outer harbour and ventured out into a very lumpy sea, following more than a week of strong south-westerlies. The wind was in the 20's as we headed out to MBN north cardinal before turning west. We were sailing in swells of 2-3m but out near the West Hinder Tower one set rolled through which, when we were in the troughs, had peaks more than a metre above the boom. I had to steer down them to avoid rolling too far.

Our ride improved a little as we turned north-west and headed towards the TSS making good speed on a close reach as the wind had veered west. A fully recovered Jameel helmed while I navigated and kept watch for ships. While Jameel steered, I sat by the cockpit bulkhead next to the wind and depth gauges. When the plotter anchor alarm went off I noticed it was also coming from the depth gauge, which I couldn't hear when I had been at the wheel. I nipped below for the gauge manual and found a setting for the anchor deep water alarm. With one 'click' the alarm was silenced forever! Finally!!!

It was difficult to hold our heading on 90° through the TSS so we began to motor, which was slower than sailing. By the time we had crossed both lanes and the separation zone, the tide had pushed us well to the east, so we now had wind on the nose and had to motor all the way to Cork Sand NCM. By then, the wind had veered further so we motored on to Landguard. Jameel had taken a 3 hour watch while I caught some sleep.

Once around Landguard we were able to slip into neutral and sail slowly into Harwich Harbour. Not long after we were safely alongside our berth. The extra distance with our easterly curve and the slower speed motoring into the wind meant the tide had turned against us much further out than planned. With our speed over ground down considerably compared to the outbound leg, this one had taken us 18 hours.

Thames Vessel Traffic Service (VTS)

An essential prerequisite is to obtain and study a copy of the Port Of London Authority's (PLA) Recreational Users Guide, tide tables and the appropriate charts, eg: Imray C1 and C2.

The Guide can be downloaded from the PLA website or better is to obtain from the PLA or other outlets a laminated hard copy. Of particular note are the recommended tracks and crossing points for leisure vessels that VTS and larger vessels expect you to follow. Until approaching the mandatory reporting points for the Thames Barrier, there is no requirement to contact Thames Vessel Traffic Service by VHF (or by mobile if no VHF) but it is good practice to do so when entering the VTS area from either direction, especially if you don't have full AIS.

The accepted format used by professional skippers is:

"London VTS, yacht/motor cruiser XXX, at XXX, inward bound/outward bound for XXX, XXX metres (draught), XXX POB (persons on board)". Despite what the textbooks say, there is generally no need to say 'Call-sign' twice, nor to use 'Over' nor 'Out'. (Anyone saying: 'Over and Out' should be keelhauled!). Note that there are three VHF channels, depending on which stretch of the River you are on. Generally, there is no need to check in when changing channels but the appropriate channel should be monitored, especially for the half-hourly broadcasts that are preceded by intermittent bleeps.

There are mandatory reporting points for all vessels when entering the Thames Barrier Control Zone from either direction, when vessels must request permission to transit the Barrier. Leisure vessels might well be asked to call again with the Barrier in sight. But that does not remove the requirement to make the initial call. The areas for each VHF channel, the Control Zone boundaries and the Barrier span letters are in the Recreational Users Guide. Note that sailing vessels with a working engine should transit the Barrier under engine power. If you don't have a working VHF, use your mobile phone.

Look out for the warning lights at Cliffe and Tilbury that warn of a ship movement at Tilbury Lock.

Strict no-nos include not monitoring the appropriate VHF channel, cutting the corner on bends, not keeping well to the starboard side, and exceeding the various speed limits. Note that some vessels are authorised to exceed the speed limits, including the clipper catamarans and emergency vessels, showing respectively yellow and blue flashing lights.

The Woolwich Ferry and other river crossing ferries (incidentally displaying a fixed blue light over a fixed white light amidships) are supposed to give way to vessels proceeding up or down river, but it might be prudent not to depend on it, albeit that the stand on vessel must comply with the obligations associated with being that.

The current Recreational Users Guide includes reference to the Tidal Thames Navigators Club for leisure vessels but this is now defunct.

Leisure skippers should listen for, and use, the appropriate sound signals at all times, including one long blast when entering the fairway from a lock etc. If you are a yacht skipper, do you have your whistle (horn) available for instant use?

It is wise to have an anchor ready for immediate deployment in the event of a propulsion failure or other emergency, and to notify VTS immediately.

Beware the shoal on the Southern side in the vicinity of the O2 Arena.

Use radar at night or in reduced visibility.

PLA permission/licence is required to operate a drone over the river and the vessel's permission should be obtained before flying a drone over another vessel. Under no circumstances fly a drone over a tanker/bunker vessel.

Skippers of motor cruisers navigating through and above Tower Bridge should familiarise themselves with the procedures for bridges, including the various arch lights and symbols, and the rules for navigation - with versus against the current. PLA Launches display one of three flags to denote the strength of the fluvial current, again shown in the Recreational Users Guide. The PLA publishes a useful book on all the bridges, *Mariners' Guide to Bridges on the Tidal Thames*, available from the PLA in hard copy or by download. Another useful book for this area is Imray's *Navigating the Thames Through London* by Robert Ludlow.

Incidentally, there is a separate VTS for the River Medway, no need to call them but wise to monitor their VTS channel and to observe the legal separation from the gas terminals, the dimensions of which vary depending on whether there is a gas vessel berthed there. There are also designated war graves that must be avoided, as well as the *Richard Montgomery*. Again, the appropriate chart is a must.





RNLI

- RNLI has four stations on the Thames: Gravesend, Tower, Chiswick and Teddington.
- Tower and Chiswick have 40 knot waterjet boats.
- Tower is the busiest RNLI station in the UK and Ireland.
- Use crotch straps on lifejackets. Retighten them fully once in the water.
- When using a throw-bag line, get someone to hold onto you to prevent you going overboard too. Get the casualty to grab the line and turn onto his/her back to be pulled in. Throw-bags are considered to be safer than solid life-rings etc, the latter has the risk of hitting the casualty on the head.
- Although not concerning sailing boats, upstream from Tower Bridge there is a volunteer organisation called 'Bridge Watch' that patrols every bridge on the look-out for potential suicides. There are a very high number of suicides and attempted suicides on the River Thames.



THAMES POLICE

- The Thames river police are the oldest police force in the World (predated by the Bow Street Runners but they are not considered to have been a police force as such).
- You might hear on the radio reference to 'Operation'; this will be an incident that does not directly concern leisure boaters, except to keep well clear of the incident and to follow all instructions.
- If you wish to contact the River Police, call 999, or 101 for non-emergencies, or the appropriate VTS VHF channel.
- At all times there are a minimum of two police boats on patrol, one upstream of their station at Wapping, and one downstream. There are specialists on standby, including divers, dog teams, firearms officers and working at height officers (scaling the underside of bridges etc).
- When passing the police pier at Wapping, watch for flashing blue lights that indicate a police boat is about to leave at speed.

THAMES COASTGUARD

Thames Coastguard is located at the Woolwich Barrier Control Centre. Contact them via Channels 16 or 14, or 999, asking for Coastguard.

ESSEX MARINE POLICE

- At the time of writing they have three vessels: *Toby Speller* at Burnham, *Sentinel* at Bradwell and *Harriet*, a training RIB.
- Essex has the longest coastline of any English county; it includes the Thames Estuary and the lower reaches of the Thames.
- Report coastal crime to Crimestoppers 0800 011 3304.

INCIDENTALLY

Be mindful that some ports and harbours share a VHF channel, eg: Channel 12 is used by Southwold and Great Yarmouth. If you are in sight of the facility entrance, it is preferable to use 1W power.

To calculate *Course to Steer (CTS)* in your head, use the '1-in-60 rule': $(Tidal\ rate \times 60) \div Boat\ Speed = Correction\ Angle$. If the tide pushes you to port, add this angle to your desired course; if to starboard, subtract it.

Key Calculation Steps

Calculate Tide Angle: Multiply the hourly rate of the tide by 60, then divide by your boat speed.

Eg: At 6 knots with 2 knots of tide, $120 \div 6 = 20^\circ$ correction.

For journeys under an hour, use half the tide rate and half the distance.

Apply Correction: If the tide is pushing you to port, add the correction angle to your intended course (True). If it is pushing you to starboard, subtract it.

Adjust for Leeway: If the wind is blowing you off course, apply an additional 3-10° correction depending on wind strength and point of sail.

Convert to Compass: Finally, apply variation and deviation to convert your True course to Magnetic.

“How long does it take an average person to become a sailor? An average person can never become a sailor.”

Clock Face Rule: The 'clock face rule' can be used to equate fractions of an hour to angles. It is a cranial method (*I just couldn't write 'mental method'!*) for calculating navigation corrections, equating hours to degrees: 1 hour of tide equals 1 o'clock etc. It helps estimate necessary heading adjustments based on tidal flow and boat speed, often used as a quick approximation for the 1-in-60 rule.

<https://www.yachtingmonthly.com/sailing-skills/course-to-steer-how-to-calculate-it-in-your-head-84017>



Fun Floaty Facts

The world-record sailing speed is 65.45 knots. The record is held by Australian Paul Larsen on 'Sailrocket 2' which was designed specifically for high-speed sailing.

Sailing has been part of the Olympics since 1896. Except for the 1904 Summer Games.

Yachting for pleasure and sport began in Holland in the late 16th century. The word 'yacht' comes from the Dutch 'jacht', an abbreviation of jaghtschip, (hunting ship).

In 1898 Joshua Slocum, a Nova-Scotian born American, became the first man to sail around the world by himself.

'Molly Cake'

A recipe from our very own Baker - Helen.
Tasty, easy and doesn't need a mixer. Win-win!

250g chopped stoned dates.

300ml water.

85g plain flour + 85g wholemeal flour + 50g ground almonds.

3 tsp baking powder.

1 tsp ground mixed spice.

500g dried mixed fruit of your choice.

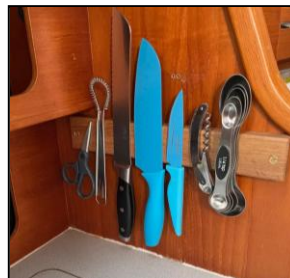
80ml of orange juice, tea or any other liquid.

1. Put dates and water in a pan and bring to the boil. Remove from heat and set aside.
2. Mix together the flours, spice, baking powder and almonds. Stir in the dried fruit.
3. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and mix well.
4. Cook for 45-50 minutes. Fan 160°C, Gas 3 in a loaf tin, or experiment if using a traybake tin. Your delicious cake is ready to eat when a skewer comes out clean.

Helen's Galley Gadget

With our sailing life being mostly 'off grid' for 2025/2026, I had given lots of thought to fitting out Sanguine's galley for long-term life aboard. We have just one small drawer for all the cutlery and cooking utensils, and I needed more space to maximise what I can cook.

A knife rack seemed like a good idea, but would need a really strong magnet to prevent a scene akin to a horror movie during rough weather. Some research revealed that a 'Mag-Blok' from Benchcrafted had a very strong magnet, looked OK and would more than double the storage space <https://benchcrafted.com/products/magblok>. Wood is much kinder to knife blades as well, so this seemed like a good option. It comes in different woods so you can match it to your boat. (Other knife blocks are available!) I can confirm the knives have not parted company from the block, despite sailing in some horrible conditions.



It's Quiz Time ...

1. What are people with ancaophobia afraid of?
2. What ruined the life of Joseph Ismay?
3. What is the name of the seaside town terrorised by Jaws?
4. What did Winston Churchill describe as nothing but "rum, sodomy and the lash"?
5. What was the name of the ship commanded by Captain Pugwash?
6. Which millionaire built 'The Spruce Goose' flying boat?
7. What fictional vessel did Captain Nemo command?
8. What is a 'Fray Bentino'?

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| 7. Nautilus | 8. A lover and keeper of FB |
| 5. Black Pig | 6. Howard Hughes |
| 3. Amity | 4. Naval Tradition |
| 1. The Wind | 2. The sinking of the Titanic |

“Those who go sailing are happier, more intelligent and better looking... according to a survey I made up.

Fray Bentos - A DIY Recipe (especially for you Mark!)

First, find a tasty Fray Bentos and stick it in a pie.

Store in a cockpit locker (that bit you can't reach is ideal) and use before 2056.

When needs must, or you fancy your pie, cook on a high heat for several days.

Serve with 'Mash gets Smashed' and left over Christmas sprouts.

(Although anything grey will do if caught unexpectedly in a storm).

For optional authenticity: You will need a shallow metal dish; a sheet of aluminium for the lid; an angle grinder to cut your aluminium sheet into a circle; a welding kit and a mask. Remember - safety at sea is very important, so keep well away from your preheating oven while fabricating the lid.