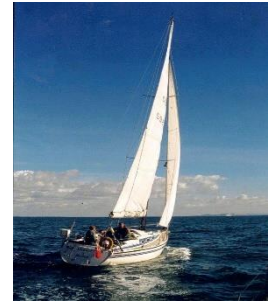




TOGLINE

The Quarterly Journal of the Trent Offshore Group
Formed and constituted, 26th September 1991



SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2015

Foul-weather Gear:- Type of clothing usually only needed in Spring, Summer Autumn and Winter...



Well, as over the last 10 years - here we go again. Yet another TOGline, another chance to try and communicate our goings-on over the last three months to an eagerly attentive

membership..... and I must say - what goings-on! The chances are that you open the Newsletter and have a good look inside to see the interesting bits then, perhaps, turn to this Editorial as an afterthought. I don't blame you! The articles submitted to this edition are first-class (as ever) BUT - from a totally different direction, for the most part. I have often suggested that a lady's view of our trips and organisation, would make interesting reading for us all That suggestion has been taken up in spades this time! The feedback in this edition has been provided by three ladies - Jean Bevan, Sue Perkins and Ruth Edwards, all newcomers to TOG. Their most interesting and informative articles which can be viewed within, have really made my day! Thank you all so much. Dilys Carby sent her feedback a couple of issues ago and I'm really delighted and so grateful, that it seems to be continuing. Please, please keep them coming - there must be more stories out there!

Talking about the articles in this TOGline, it is very obvious that we have an amazing number of enthusiasts who are prepared to go to great lengths to seek their enjoyment. South-west Wales, North-west Scotland, Solent, Cornwall, Caribbean, and Mediterranean – the list is almost endless. Yet always the same theme comes through loud and clear – what a great time was had by all. So much of this is down to people like John Bryant for his organisational abilities. To each Commodore for accepting so much responsibility. Finally, last but

not least, the Skippers. They carry the ultimate responsibility and who do so much to ensure that enjoyment is not marred by any mishaps. As organisations go, TOG is so fortunate to have such an enthusiastic Council Membership. None are drawn from the accepted “Captains of Industry”, but are **so** enthusiastic. Long may it continue so.

What a great day for the America's Cup! I don't know whether anyone had an opportunity to see the trials live, but certainly, reading about it in the newspapers set pulses racing. Did anyone see anything about it on the news? Nah!! No call for it, sir. Yeah, right - then why are so many people afflicted by a sudden desire to get on the water and start learning? (*Shades of the Olympics?*) There is a long way to go yet, but a start like that must do wonders for the morale of the crews. Credit to Ben Ainslie. He helped win it for the Americans last time - let's hope he can do it for us this time! The new headquarters in Portsmouth are really something. They seem to give an air of determination and permanency. One thing that did intrigue me. I know the sails are an aerofoil section, but since they can't be reefed due to being solid, they can't sail in winds above 25 knots. All that power, riding on foils, but still having one hand tied behind their backs. Progress.....? Good luck, anyway and let's hope they bring back the trophy on their return four years hence....

Finally, until October 31st (Autumn Edition), enjoy while you can, keep them coming and stay dry! Thank you all. Fair winds and calm seas...

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PRESIDING MASTER'S MUSINGS

by Neil Macfarlane



Summer 2015

Our sailing season is fully underway – with the completion since spring of the Pembrokeshire and Firth of Clyde Sailexes (a neologism coined in the mists of

time, presumably by Norman, from “sailing expedition” – but should the plural be Sailices as in indices?). Those trips are fully reported elsewhere, but I must acknowledge once again on behalf of the crews and the broader membership, the major contribution of our skippers to the success of our sailing programme. On each trip, they assume a legal responsibility for the safety of yacht and crew, as well as a more general duty care for the crew's welfare. This includes victualling, an itinerary influenced by the weather and sea conditions, full involvement of all crew members in the navigation and sailing of the yacht – and not least, fun and enjoyment. Thus, our thanks go to Alan, Kevin and Stewart for their efforts. I had a splendid time on the Clyde, visiting old haunts and new anchorages and harbours, in excellent company. In particular, it was good that the three yachts had opportunities to meet up and the crews savour the others' excellent hospitality. It's always great fun to be first on the buoy and then relax with a drink to observe the “master” classes in picking up buoys provided by later arrivals - many thanks to Stewart and his crew on *Skua*!

Our Clyde cruise revealed a number of yachts flying the St Andrew's Cross (also code flag M indicating a stopped vessel making no way), sometimes on the stern, as an alternative to the Red Ensign. The late Norman Allen, an expert in flag etiquette, would NOT have approved of this practice. Indeed, this seemingly benign nationalistic display, violates British and International law under the Merchant Shipping Act. Flag etiquette is an intricate business, with rules for special Ensigns, orders of precedence for positions of other flags, burgees and pennants. Stern, masthead, starboard and port spreaders, and flag sizes. Two years ago, we caused some consternation to a yacht's skipper in Tobermory harbour, by informing him that his defaced Blue Ensign was being flown upside down. Also it remains a matter of profound disappointment (and an unpublished letter to *The Times*) as follows. In 2006, when sailing up the Sound of Islay on board a leaky *Full Moon* with Peter Tytler and Stewart Cook, our loyal Ensign-dipping to the Queen aboard the *MV Hebridean Princess*, remained unacknowledged by her crew. (*Outraged of Tunbridge Wells... Ed*)

Recent editions of the RYA's Cruising News, contain some good advice for TOG members. In June, advice was given on “Looking after your lifejacket” – namely, what you should do on a regular basis in addition to expert servicing which would include an over-inflation test to check for leaks. Following this advice in Scotland, revealed a couple of lifejackets where the gas cylinder had worked loose. The automatic inflation would not have functioned in an emergency. Also, the RYA has just released an updated version of its mobile smartphone app - RYA Safe Trx 2015. This supplements other safety technology such as VHF DSC and distress beacons, to provide personal technology that can inform others of voyage plans and of location in an emergency. Not forgetting weather information and tracking functions.

Roll on Croatia with five yachts now chartered

REPORTS

TOG – Clyde Estuary 27th June – 4th July 2015

By Stewart Cook



Skua- Jeanneau 42i

Stewart Cook
Mary Bancroft
Andy McWilliam
Heather Hill
Peter Perkins
Susan Perkins

Moonsong- Bavaria 44

Alan Mortimore
Neil Macfarlane
Dilys Carby
Keith Stedman
Sheila Spikins
Doug Sutherland

Swift - Harmony 42

Kevin Martin
Linda Martin
Brian Rowland
Jennifer Batson
Neville Buckle
Ruth Edwards

The crew for the Trent Offshore Group annual trip to Scotland included many familiar faces, a number of new faces to TOG and even two, new to sailing. In common, they were all looking forward to an interesting week sailing around the islands



and lochs within the Clyde Estuary.

The crews met at the offices of Flamingo Yacht Hire, although a number managed to find the restaurant first to start off the week in style.

Whilst the crew(s) relaxed, the skippers and first mates were busy with the yacht handover procedures. Once they were complete, the crews joined the skippers onboard their allocated yacht, to assist in the storing of personal equipment and supplies for the week. With the safety briefing undertaken and life jackets allocated, the group left Largs Marina at 17:30 hrs, to set sail in a SW F4, for Port Bannatyne Marina on the Isle of Bute for the evening.

Sunday 28th June, Port Bannatyne – Lamlash Bay, Arran.

Most of the crew(s) took the opportunity to go ashore and take a walk around the village of Port Bannatyne to admire the houses along the seafront. With a weather forecast SW F4/5 and showers, the yachts left the marina around 10:30. *Moonsong* turned north to sail around the East and West Kyles and down Bute Sound. *Swift* decided to head south via Firth of Clyde. *Skua* meanwhile, took the opportunity outside the marina where there was a number of vacant mooring-buoys, to practice picking

up a mooring-buoy under engine, prior to heading south. As this was the first time that a number of *Skua*'s crew had visited the area, the skipper decided to sail into Rothesay Bay to take a close look at Rothesay town and the Victorian Toilets, prior to



continuing on their way. Once south of the protection of the Isle of Bute, the wind and seas picked up giving a good introduction to sailing for the novices on board (Susan & Peter). As the sea smoothed out, with the sun shining, *Skua*'s crew practised man overboard under engine. The sight of a squall over the Isle of Arran brought an end to the practice as the crew quickly slipped into their wet-weather gear. The squall, as many others that afternoon, remained over the Isle of Arran. *Moonsong*, having taken a different route to Lamlash Bay, joined with *Skua* to sail together into the bay to pick up mooring-buoys for the evening. They were joined a few minutes later by Swift.

Monday 29th June, Lamlash Bay – Campbeltown.

With a favourable shipping forecast, the 3 yachts slipped their mooring at 10:45 to leave the bay by the south exit. Swift decided to head north towards the lochs in the upper Clyde. They spent the night in Tarbet, prior to continuing up to the head of Loch Fyne the following day. *Moonsong* and *Skua* headed southerly towards the Lighthouse at Turnberry Point on the



Scottish coast, east of Ailsa Craig. *Moonsong* tacked north of the lighthouse, setting a course for Campbeltown. *Skua* continued south towards Girvan, taking a closer look at the lighthouse before also turning west. As the afternoon progressed, the sea changed and the yachts were subject to a beam sea giving an uncomfortable last few miles. Once Davaar Island at the entrance to Campbeltown Loch was passed, sails were furled on *Skua* and we motored on into the loch to pick up one of the new (from a previous visit) visitor buoys. *Moonsong*'s crew joined *Skua*'s crew on board for pre-dinner drinks and a catch up on the days sail.

Tuesday 30 June, Campbeltown – Tarbert.

An uncomfortable night was spent on the mooring as the forecast F7 wind came through, disturbing the peace of the Loch. The skippers, although they were up deck through the night, felt safe on the moorings as, given by the cleanliness of the mooring strop, were fairly new.

By the time dawn broke, the wind had decreased and Campbeltown looked splendid under blue sky and sunshine. At 10:30, after having breakfast on deck, both yachts slipped their moorings. Once clear, *Skua* set sail and switched off the engine. As Davaar Island was reached, *Moonsong* unfurled the jib - which promptly ripped. The jib was immediately re-furled and the mainsail raised. The 2 skippers had a discussion, with *Moonsong* deciding to continue on its way and to make contact with Flamingo Yachts advising them of the situation. Flamingo arranged for the sail to be removed and repaired that night in Tarbet, our next planned marina. Once passed Davaar Island and into the Kilbrannan Sound, the sun disappeared - to be replaced by fog. Looking backwards, Campbeltown is bathed in sunshine, whilst the visibility in the sound is poor. With navigation lights switched on and a keen lookout, a course was set north up the Sound for Lochranza. On approaching the entrance to



Lochranza, with a strengthening wind the fog lifted, visibility cleared and the sun returned. With the wind sweeping down the mountain valley and 2 unsuccessful attempts to pick up a mooring, Andy was promptly dispatched to the dingy (his favourite mooring tool!), which had been lowered into the water and tied to the yacht's stern. With Andy in dinghy, the skipper reversed the yacht up to the mooring, whereupon a successful pickup was achieved. After lunch on a sun kissed deck, *Skua* motored out of the Loch, raising the sails and setting course via Inchmarnock Water for Tarbet. A mooring was found next to *Moonsong* on an inner pontoon. An invitation was received and accepted, to go on board their yacht to sample Gin and other delights. Both crews dined on board their respective yachts before meeting up ashore in a local hotel.

Wednesday 1 July, Tarbet – Tighnabruaich

As organised by Flamingo, *Moonsong*'s sails were removed and repaired overnight by a local sailmaker. By noon the sails had been refitted.

With a warm, sunny morning, both crews went ashore to visit the attractive village of Tarbet, including the castle ruins (James IV) overlooking the village. Using the services of a "local lad" - Neil Macfarlane - an excellent fish shop was found up a cobbled alleyway. Both crews purchased a selection of fish for lunch and dinner. Whilst *Skua*'s crew enjoyed a scallops and crab lunch on deck prior to leaving the marina around 13:30, *Moonsong* headed south back down Lower Loch Fyne. After lunch, *Skua*, once out into the Loch, decide to practise man overboard under

sail. Just as the MOB exercises were being completed, *Swift* appeared alongside on their way back down Loch Fyne, after having spent the night at the head of the Loch. They were pleased to inform us they had enjoyed a hearty breakfast in the Loch Fyne restaurant. The wind which had been previously from the NE, turned SW, giving both yachts the chance to sail in company. A pleasant sail was experienced down the loch back into Inchmarnock Water and into the West Kyle of Bute. As the Kyle was entered, the wind died, resulting in the sails being furled. The sight of the steamship Waverley never fails to



impress, especially being passed at Ardlamont Point on the entrance to the Kyle. Under engine, moorings were sought out at

Tighnabruaich for the night. Some ten minutes later, we were joined by *Moonsong* who had spent the afternoon sailing near the entrance to the Kyle. After dinner on board, the 3 crews went ashore to meet up in the Royal hotel and to pay our mooring fees. I can confirm that the midges are just as severe as in previous years, resulting in a number of the crew suffering a little nip or two.

Thursday 2 July, Tighnabruaich – Loch Goilhead.

The crews awoke to find the sun burning, the mist clearing and a fine day in prospect. The 3 yachts left the moorings at 10:30 to motor-sail along the top of the Isle of Bute. Whilst *Moonsong* headed directly through the Burnt Isles, *Swift* and *Skua* sailed into Loch Riddon to view both its charm and the lovely houses along the banks. Turning at the head of the Loch, both yachts retraced their steps to pass through the main channel at the Burnt Isles and into the East Kyle. With the sun shining and a favourable wind, both yachts enjoyed a pleasant sail down the Kyle, passing Rothesay Bay and Toward Point into the River Clyde. Once into the Clyde, the wind dropped off. The engine was started to motor-sail up the Clyde through the Gantocks. *Skua* had an interesting moment with an obstacle in the water when the autopilot failed to disengage. A quick reverse movement was called for. The mate Andy was rudely awakened from his rest period to the shout of “switch off the 12v supply at the master panel”! Anyway, all was ok, but autopilot was given a wide berth!! As the wind returned, the engine was again switched off for a good sail passed the Holy Loch entrance, on up Loch Long passing the naval establishment at Coulport and into Loch Goil. At Carrick Castle, the anchor was dropped for afternoon tea alongside an already at anchor *Moonsong*. *Swift*, who had been close by all day, continued on beyond the castle to the head of the loch. They were closely followed as *Moonsong* raised anchor. Both yachts picked up visitors’ moorings for the night. After tea, *Skua* raised anchor and with flukey winds within the loch, a gentle sail was enjoyed, prior to joining our fellow mariners on a mooring for the night.

Friday 3 July, Loch Goilhead – Largs.

The crews awoke to a calm morning, the yachts and surrounding hills being clearly reflected in the loch. After breakfast on deck, *Skua* left the mooring at 09:30, followed by the others some ten minutes later. Initially, *Skua* motor-sailed,

but with an increasing wind, later sailed down the loch, past Carrick Castle. The wind dropped at the mouth of the loch, requiring the engine to be restarted to ensure we adhered to the access restriction at Coulport. Once passed the restricted area and as the wind returned, we were treated to the sight of 5



landing craft at speed heading from the Clyde towards upper Loch Long. It was an

impressive sight.

The 3 yachts entered the Holy Loch and, whilst *Moonsong* only stayed for a quick view of the marina, *Skua* and *Swift* stopped for lunch and took the opportunity to top up both fuel and water tanks. *Skua* was the last of the group to leave the Holy Loch Marina, motored out into the loch, raised and set the sails to enter the River Clyde. With a tack across the river to Cloch Pointback, *Skua* was in a good position on the next sail down the Clyde. *Moonsong* was spotted on the horizon, also tacking down the Clyde. Both yachts dropped their sails outside Largs Marina to bring to a close an enjoyable weeks sailing. With the sun shining, the yachts entered the marina to berth on their home pontoon.

The crews met that evening in The Room restaurant in Largs to round off the week with a final dinner. The evening was made complete by the crews meeting on board *Moonsong*, with the request “bring any drink you have leftover”. A fine evening was had in good company, listening to poetry (*very erudite!* – Ed) and stories from across the crews.

A change in the weather was dramatic. When we went aboard *Moonsong*, it was a pleasant, mild evening. When Andy and I left to go back on *Skua*, the wind was blowing strongly and *Skua* was straining at the warps. With the yacht repositioned and additional warps set, Andy and I retired for what was an unpleasant, noisy, bumpy night. We were both up more than once checking warps and to ensure the ties on the mainsail were tight. We had been requested to leave the mainsail with the sail bag zipped, but to keep it unzipped to allow quick access to undertake a repair to the sail on the Saturday morning. I was informed that some crew members did not hear or feel the effects of the unpleasant weather as it passed through. Just goes to show the medicinal properties of “the water of life”.....

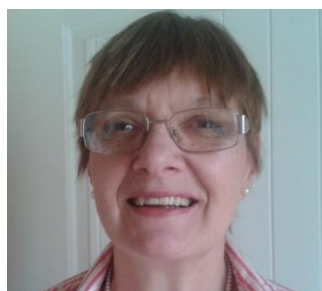


Dawn broke to strong winds and very heavy, horizontal rain. Not a pleasant morning. As TOG tradition, the yachts were cleaned in time for handover

back to Flamingo, but I would suspect many of the crew got wet taking their gear back to the cars. As was a bonus, there was no need to wash down the decks.

As to the week, overall we had a very good sail, taking in many of the popular sights of the Clyde Estuary and lochs. Those new to sailing intimated that they enjoyed themselves very much and are looking forward to the Caribbean. Another person said that "TOG is just what I was looking for". The Clyde area again lived up to its reputation giving us good winds and pleasant sunshine.

Total GPS Mileage: 201



Nautical Novice's Notes or Impressions from a First-time Sailor (or What really happened.....)
By Susan Perkins

Elsewhere in this newsletter you can read Stewart Cook's full account of the Trent Offshore Group's annual trip to Scotland.

It was Stewart who suggested that Togline's readers might like to read the impressions of the week from someone entirely new to sailing. The afternoon of Saturday 27 June this year marked the very first time I'd ever set foot on a sailing boat.

With my husband, Peter, I had been invited to join a crew which included two qualified skippers, Stewart Cook and Andy McWilliam. The others were Heather Hill, who had spent much of the previous fortnight as half of a crew of two moving a boat from Portugal to Spain, and my sister, Mary Bancroft, who has sailed for years. Back in October, she suggested that Peter and I might like to join TOG in the Caribbean next year. As 2016 drew nearer, she and Stewart both thought we should find out what we were letting ourselves in for.

My first impression of the marina at Largs was that it looked just like a jigsaw-puzzle picture: vertical masts, white decks and sleek superstructures receded into the distance below a blue sky and fluffy clouds. Water gleamed blackly between the boats.



My other first impression was that *Skua* was not very big. Not as a holiday home for six people for a week. But it was big in a way I'd not foreseen: the deck stood much higher than the pontoon.

Those of you used to boats will not recognise my moment of despair at seeing that. I have never been sporty, and six years ago I ruptured an Achilles tendon. Even if I rubbed in WD40 after my morning shower every day, my legs would not be springy. *Skua* had no boarding ladder. Everyone else (including Peter) bounced aboard. Alone on the pontoon, I spotted a piece of wood apparently sawn from a railway sleeper, the 'mounting block' they'd probably all used. Alas, the humiliation of having to be pushed from behind awaited me next day at Port Bannatyne. Kindly souls among you will share my sense of elation that by the time we left Tarbet I needed help from neither man nor log.

It hadn't occurred to me to worry about getting on and off the boat, but I had worried about being sick (I wasn't), and about my sense of balance, which is not good. To my surprise, it improved. I can only think that it must have been because of the constant need to adjust to the boat's motion.



I had also

worried about what to wear. What did I have that was suitable, what did I need to get? I didn't want to splash out on clothes for just one week, but I didn't want to be unsuitably clad either. Stewart and Mary solved this by lending us salopettes and jackets, gloves and boots, and assuring us that trousers, tee-shirts

and fleeces we already owned would be suitable. Mary did advise me to buy a tube scarf. Good move: it kept me cosy, and was handy to wipe splashes



from my specs, even drips from my nose. Stewart had advised us to learn a few knots. I wasn't a Girl Guide and didn't have a pony, so the only knots I know are reef and granny. With the diagrams in front of me I could tie the 'seven essential sailing knots', but I couldn't remember which was a clove hitch and which a bowline. If they were essential, I was doomed.

I did bring some relevant life skills on board: I can do mending, I am quite a competent housekeeper and I like cooking. On the first evening, while we were moored to a visitor buoy in Lamlash Bay, I served up a big pot of chilli con carne (and plenty of side-dishes) I'd prepared at home. Perhaps, as a reward for that, no one asked me to tie a knot all week. I also became – to Peter's alarm – the 'purser'. This entailed sorting out a budget, buying drinks and top-up groceries, and reimbursing those who had purchased the



mountains of provisions we'd loaded on board. These were stowed below seats, behind seats, in cupboards hidden under the table and in panelling, and in a chest-type fridge. How many hidey-holes did the boat possess? How would we ever find what we wanted? We'd better eat the chicken pieces the next night, and the strawberries...

As the days went by, I tried to keep track of what food we had left, and what needed to be used next. I'm



not saying I did it all – I didn't. Heather and I concocted a triumphant final evening meal on board at Loch Goilhead that used up most of our perishable stores: smoked salmon and brown bread; curried hard-boiled eggs Rogan Josh with rice, green beans and carrots; a perfectly ripened cantaloupe melon; cheese and biscuits; chocolate. Only baguettes, bacon and beans remained to be cooked – and they became lunch on our final day, as we left the Holy Loch for the River Clyde.

My most vivid memory from the galley, though, is of making tea while sailing fast in squally weather on the way to Lamlash Bay. I'd been sitting high on the starboard side of the cockpit before descending the companionway and seeing the saloon's port windows under foaming grey-green water. But the stove top remained level on its gimbals, and the kettle soon boiled cheerfully. Attempting to anticipate problems, I placed the mugs in the sink before starting to pour water into them. But 'Put kettle spout onto rim of mug' was the lesson I learned. The whole saloon needed to be on gimbals!

Why was I not concerned when I saw that the port side of the boat was so far down in the water? It was because Stewart and Andy were so evidently capable and knowledgeable, Mary and Heather so experienced and unperturbed, that it was obvious there was nothing to worry about. So when at Campbeltown we swung through what felt like 180 degrees



on our mooring because of the Force 7 wind, I remember waking and thinking that, if the others weren't alarmed, then I needn't be. I went straight back to sleep. We slept in the fore cabin. Mary and Stewart told us it was because a cabin near the companionway was better for the skipper in an emergency, but I felt the arrangement concealed real generosity. We had been warned to expect to be 'out of our comfort zone', and at times I was. My first reaction on seeing our 'bedroom' was that we were going to be sleeping on a triangular shelf. However, the fore-cabin was considerably more spacious than the other two, and

the en-suite head gave us additional privacy. (The way the heads worked shocked me – how can it be that in 2015 they are allowed to discharge directly into the sea? Or worse, into a marina?) But what I missed most was a headboard to lean against. If you wear (as I do) varifocal



glasses, lying sideways to read is difficult. The way I like to open and close my days, is by sitting up in bed and reading. **I didn't know what to expect** when Stewart said we were going to practise 'man overboard'. I would not have been surprised if Andy had jumped in! It turned out to be simultaneously hilarious and serious. The first time we did it, using the motor, to my surprise, I not only rescued the 'man' but also brought *Skua* in close enough for others to do the same. A day or so later, we tried different methods of doing it under sail. It is a good thing we were only retrieving a fender tied to a bucket. A real man would have developed hypothermia from the time one of the methods left him bobbing about in the cold waters of Loch Fyne. I don't claim I now know how to sail, but I loved taking the helm from time to time. I was proud that when *Skua*'s mainsail developed a little tear near the bottom, Andy and Stewart had found the repair kit and - I was allowed to patch it. I'd always wondered what a 'sailmaker's palm' looked like. Now I've used one

Gliding along the coast, watching dwellings or hills or (Andy's word,) transits approach and then disappear, made time feel as if it was moving at a different speed from normal. Seeing Andy, Heather, Mary and Stewart move confidently about the boat gave me an appreciation of their expertise. I caught glimpses of seals and porpoises; smelt the tang of seaweed; heard oyster-catchers and the thrash of the paddles of the *Waverley*; tasted the best scallops I've ever cooked at Tarbet and visited places I would not have gone to from the landward side.



So how would I sum up our week? At times I was cold, uncomfortable and tired; even now, at the end of July, marks from bites of the vicious Tighnabruaich midges remain visible. At times I longed to be alone, to have a hot bath, to be able to lose myself in a book... an observation, not a complaint: in the evenings, we drank far more than usual. Hardly surprising then that there was a lot of laughing, especially at Andy's stories, and a lot of talking. (Sorry, guys, some of the political stuff got a bit tedious.) Hot showers have never felt as luxurious as on the last

evening in Largs, when we made a stylish end to our week. Clean clothes and a sit-down meal in a restaurant! Heather and I rounded it off by helping Mary fulfil her ambition of eating ice cream in Nardini's, then strolling back to the boat under a full moon. However, the weather changed in the night. By the morning, sluicing, horizontal rain and strong winds made us glad we were at the end, not the start, of our first week of sailing. It was a very interesting, friendly and well-organised holiday. We are looking forward to the Leeward Islands. Thank you, Andy, Heather, Mary and Stewart, and TOG

First TOG Sailex: A Fyne Adventure!

By Ruth Edwards



Six hungry crew. One loch head restaurant. Challenge accepted! Mind you, we could have breakfasted off the mooring rope mussels, so plentiful were they! The previous night's battle with them ran us out of daylight for dinner there. But - next morning, time

for action: shore surveyed, eatery contacted, dinghy readied. Advance party successfully landed, whereupon the outboard thought it was mission accomplished. Coaxed back to life, it agreed to a second attempt and all were soon ashore. Dinghy hauled well up, the intrepid crew set off down the rocky path to their objective: the Loch Fyne Oyster Bar. Just one obstacle remained: plentiful vegetation with no apparent way through. Skipper Kevin spotted a narrow defile, whilst the commando section tackled a nearby stream bed. All six dodged the non-stop traffic and made it safely to the welcome shade of the dining room. A most satisfying repast of Eggs Royale (Gaelic version) consumed, it was time to return and six happy sailors climbed aboard "Swift" to release her from the mussel farm.

Further culinary delights followed: Brian's full English



breakfasts for six were a miracle of micro-cookery; hearty evening meals appeared out of fridge and cupboard. A new Galley Law was discovered: kettles boil water, large pans don't. It

was almost Spag Bol minus Spag, but the stove relented (and Swift's crew survived my cooking. Just.) Fear not TOG first-timers: you will eat well.

So, crew refuelled, what of the voyage? If you take the Dunoon - Kames road, pull in atop the hill and look south, you'll be awestruck: the Kyles of Bute lie before you, breathtaking, good as any alpine view. Sailing through them? - even better! - truly most beautiful scenery. Skipper Kevin chose well: Arran's Lochranza and Lamlash Bay, Loch Fyne, Minard Bay, the Kyles, Lochs Long, Striven and Goil, Clyde approaches: unfolding patchworks of greenery - deciduous, coniferous, meadows and hillsides, estates and castles. Dolphins, porpoises and seals were spotted. Lochs Long, Striven, and Holy Loch echoed defence and munitions, guarding the freedom we're

privileged to enjoy in sailing. From Largs' and Bannatyne's modern marinas to Tarbert's more traditional one (an easy shore run to bank and shops). Overnight anchorages in Loch Goil and near Tighnabruaich. We slept well. The Scottish weather, renowned as "dreich", relented: no storms beset us, we stayed mostly dry and able to admire the changing views, sails hoisted whenever possible.

However good the food, superb the scenery and glorious the sunshine, there's one thing makes a voyage memorable: the crew. Without exception, all, kindly and patiently, dealt with this OAP's loss of grey cells and lack of experience. Kevin and Linda expertly skippered and provisioned us all, and with our differing backgrounds - medicine, finance, electronics, mining and aviation - and a poet in residence - our evening discussions were most enjoyable. Whatever our calling, we all have a



passion for sailing which brings complete strangers together in a way like no other. I will long remember my first TOG sailex.....

(Know exactly what you mean-Ed)

Thank you Kevin, Linda, Jenny, Brian, Nev, and TOG.

Background note:-

Forty years ago, another adventure started the dream. Sailing the Solent in glorious sunshine, on a college pal's comfy wooden cabin cruiser, exploring deserted creeks and small harbours and stargazing by night, opened a new world for this Lancashire mill town lass. Reaching five-O the dream persisted. Sailing clubs contacted, twelve happy years of dinghy-crewing followed, but still the sea beckoned. Back to the Solent for Comp Crew, then a couple of trips whilst searching for cruising clubs; and finally - eureka! Within days, almost, of joining TOG, I was en-route to Scotland, crew unknown, having jumped ship at Brighton after a passage from Grimsby with a colleague, thus missing the sailex planning meeting.

First TOG sailex completed and looking forward to many more. Dreams *can* come true! *(Don't I know it - Ed)*

Thank you TOG.

Sailex Report Pembroke (or An Otter's Tail)

By Paul Ratcliffe



Lucky Tarte Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 42i

Alan Mortimore - Commodore
Gareth Broome
Roland Charge
David Grandison
Jean Bevan

Otter Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 379

Paul Ratcliffe - Skipper
Brian Rowlands
Neville Buckle
Andrew Lacey
Damien Tozer

It's probably a good thing that I don't keep a diary. Writing this report a nearly two months after the sailex means less boring detail is included - just the highlights and the few low moments. Nobody really wants to hear about exactly when we ate all the pies, what the prevailing sea-state and visibility was and when the Commodore launched an elicited raid into a live MOD firing range. Or do they?

1 Friday 5/6/2015 Neyland to Dale 10nm 1 Night Hour
Crews travelled to Neyland Marina arriving lunchtime onwards. Glorious weather and good winds had just set in and didn't cease till the final day when we were travelling home. Thanks to John for organizing this with the help of Alan (well- I assume he did - he doesn't usually skimp on these sort of things). We watched *Otter* arrive from the Isle of Man from the comfort of the marina café at 1430. Damien, on his first TOG trip, had nobly volunteered to victual *Otter* had arrived in good time from Belgium to ease my niggling worry about cannibalism on day one. Neville and Andy had arrived earlier,



but didn't look appetizing to be honest Andy's wife had made a lovely lasagne for us from which I reserved an extra-large portion for

several days - just in case. Brian was saved by his splendid butcher's pies and pasties.

Skippers completed formalities and practical handover with Roland from Pembrokeshire Cruising. The highlight of mine being the good-humoured derision aimed at the Chart Plotter, instrumentation and on board entertainment system with a hearty "Good Luck - none of the manuals on board cover them". Roland then hopped off and made his way up the pontoon with



enviable navigational certainty. Perhaps the previous crew had brought their own sighting compass and GPS too, I thought. The crew set about testing if the lead line worked. They concluded the Sounder was reading depth under the keel - not depth. It was nice to know we had another 1.7M of water to play with and so early on in the sailex too.

Lucky Tarte made the first move to motor sail to Dale, some 10 NM East down Milford Haven against a slight but increasing Westerly. *Otter* slipped about an hour later, having struggled to find stowage for the all the Bratwurst. Both took advantage of

the late evening and ebb, passing the pleasant and interesting scenery including the fuel terminals and commercial shipping alongside. The whole area has really changed for the better over the last 40 years. *Lucky Tarte* had made it slightly easier to find the Island Pontoon in the pitch black of Dale by leaving all their Nav Lights on. Very considerate of them, we thought. However they were only trying to work out how to activate just the anchor light on the very unclear switch panel (I blame the French). Albeit very late, both vessels dined very well on board - as we did for the whole trip. We ate all the pies at around 2330! The Irish whiskey went down well too.

2 Saturday 6/6/2015 Dale to Lundy Island Log 48 NM
Cooked breakfast - Well who wouldn't? A glorious morning, just right for a foray by Tender into Dale to explore and buy a toothbrush. A force 6- 7, Possible SW Gale 8 blowing in the Irish sea/Bristol channel till later and unfavourable tide till after midday. You can't check everything on handover, so it was disappointing to find a thwart fixing strap broken on the tender as we put it together on the pontoon. Undeterred, three crew braved the strong headwind and chop and made way ashore.

Knowing that if conditions improved, it was going to be a late start on a long and "interesting" passage to Lundy Island, the Lasagne was prepared for Lunch. Skippers and crew decided that, since the forecast for veering and decreasing wind and sea state was proving to be correct, we would nose out into the Bristol Channel and see how it was now. We could always come back if needs must. If bearable, we could carry on in the knowledge that conditions were going to improve.

Otter checked the Full Main and Genoa and put in Reef three ready for slipping at 1300. Shortly after getting into the swell, a preventer was rigged to stop an accidental gybe being caused by the very confused sea, even though we were essentially on a broad reach! Weeks of Strong North Westerlies, followed by



the recent change to SW then veering back to W-NW today plus wind against Spring Tide now

abating. (*What a combination-Ed*) All this reflecting off the Narrowing Bristol Channel Coasts. It wasn't nice. 2 hours in, Damien succumbed, having been below for just a bit too long prepping drinks and snacks. We decided it was going to be worse going back than carrying on to Lundy. Brian, then myself, at about 3 and 4 hours respectively, both went white/green having been below to Navigate and do the log. On the bright side, the sun was still shining and we had made good way despite being regularly snubbed and rounded. The sea state improved over the next couple of hours. Everyone recovered more or less, so reefs were shaken out to have a fantastic sail at 7-8 Knots the rest of the way to Lundy. We went sightseeing round the West and South of the Island to anchor up near *Lucky T* on the East of at 2000 Hours. Did we have the Pasties or the Curry? Well, we ate something on board and had a bit too much to drink.

3 Sunday 7/6/2015 Lundy Island to Swansea Log 46 NM

Cooked Breakfast on Deck? Marvellous! Both Crews went ashore to explore Lundy. Wind was now SE making landing tenders on the nearest slip difficult with breaking waves. Neville



jumped out and missed the slip taking an unplanned morning dip. Some made it as far as the well-stocked shop, when

the lure of the only bar in town took over (for a coffee so they say). It was there, Andrew and Neville were quizzed about whether they wanted to pay the unpublicised £12 per head mooring/landing fees! Taken aback, they said they would have to consult with the Skipper. Luckily, at this time, I was on a deckchair at the top of the disused lighthouse, blissfully unaware and admiring the view. Ignorance is 9/10 of the law, I thought, as they related the story to me back on the Slip at 1200HRS.

We decamped to the more sheltered Slip adjacent the lifeboat station to avoid a further soaking. *Lucky T* made their, now customary early start to Swansea, disappearing off the horizon whilst *Otter* had a relaxed Lunch on deck in the sun. The sailing in company idea wasn't working out and neither were our Passage plans! The light winds meant a Motor-sail was necessary for the first three hours, with good sailing from 1600 onwards, all the way into the lock queuing system at Swansea at 2015. As it turns out, because of the backlog and *Lucky T* being too large to fit with the previous lock-in, we both met up in the Lock and hence onto the Lock, into the Marina, mooring up at 21:00.



Lucky T plied me with drink and snacks, whilst crews prepared the evening meal on-board, noting that most of Swansea was now

closed. The passage West was noted by Alan to pass Castlemartin MOD Range and that we would need to check if it was active. Many had a very late Shower in the excellent facilities at around 2300, in preparation for a planned early morning start at 0730 for a long Westerly passage.

4 Monday 8/6/2015 Swansea to Dale Log 58 NM

Breakfast same as yesterday. Wouldn't say no. *Lucky T* hadn't moved and it was nearly 0900. We had decided 7-30 was far too early too - after all we were on Holiday. They slipped at 1013 and *Otter* at 1130, making use of free flow through both the locks. Light NE winds again meant motor-sailing for a couple of hours to make good way. Shortly after, we had reef two in and were making 8 knots under sail in a NE 4-5. Fantastic! 1400HRS - *Otter* tried to contact *Lucky Tarte* on the VHF and phone to no avail (as per most of the Sailex), so phoned Castlemartin range. The automatic message said the

range was in operation till 1630, but specified no distance out. This could vary but, not wanting to be held up waiting for 1630 to enter, *Otter* stayed on the course running 12NM parallel to the coast. This would the range completely whilst keeping a dual watch on the range VHF frequency. About two hours later, the range started enquiring of a vessel at a particular Lat/Long twice. I checked it wasn't us but someone on the ESE fringes. With



increasing urgency, a call went out again, then again with position and heading and speed, then again with Range and bearing from St Gove's head. Clearly, they had a fix on the vessel and were preparing to fire! It was at this point, somebody sounding very like the commodore, making out to be a vessel called *Lady T*, called in to identify themselves. This was followed by a call in response from *Lucky Tarte* then *Lucky T*. Unfortunately, we couldn't hear all the exchange, but it did cause some amusement later, surmising that someone was



bluffing a three-boat raid into the live firing range about 6nm to the NNW of us. Anchored in the North of the Bay at

Dale at 2030. After eating on board, sat admiring *Lucky Tarte*'s Red anchor light with a tippie or two on deck.

5 Tuesday 9/6/2015 Dale - Neyland - Skomer Log 36 NM

Unfortunately, the previous three long passages and had conditions had taken their toll and aggravated Damien's pre-existing back problem. It was with a certain degree of melancholy that *Otter* set off at 0940 to Motor-sail back up to Neyland to drop Damien off to make his way home. A loss of an excellent crew member who had been great and valued company

. The rest of the crew took advantage of the facilities to shower, replenish water and have a relaxed lunch in the sun before slipping again at 1400. *Otter* attempted to beat the tide on a passage round the West side of Skomer and into St Bride's bay. We were too late. Eventually, concluding that the 3 knots tide against and a NE 3-4 wasn't doing much for us, we settled on heading back into South Haven, Skomer at 1830. *Lucky T* were already anchored, having been out West to Grassholm Island and back. We ate on board, marvelling at the Puffins, Shearwaters

and Guillemots in abundance on the cliffs, in the air and in the water and later the galaxy of stars above. That night's sleep was interrupted by occasional very loud, loud bangs and reverberations. On investigation, I concluded that, having seen the literally constant overflight of Shearwaters in every direction above the Anchor light, it was these, colliding at speed with wire rigging in the pitch blackness, causing the noises.

Wednesday 10/6/2015 Skomer – Solva – St Brides Bay – Skomer Log 32nm

Breakfast on deck with the birdlife. One shearwater had unfortunately come a cropper and was found dead on the deck, proving the earlier theory. A burial at sea was the best we could do for it. *Lucky T* moved round to North Haven so that Crew could go ashore to explore the Bird Observatory and exhibition before the first day trippers arrived by ferry at 1000. *Otter* concluded we probably had the best view from where we were, raised the Anchor at 1030 to make passage under sail West of Skomer into St Bride's bay and on to Solva. Arrived Solva by lunch to find that the charted depth and those hints in all the almanacs and Pilots were all incorrect. We couldn't find enough water to be comfortable swinging behind the Black Rock in the entrance with the Mainland giving no real protection from the force 3 NE. So we made our way quickly under motor, 1nm E to anchor for a Mediterranean-style lunch beneath the high cliffs at Dinas Fawr at 1430. A local boat set pots up all around. Scorchcio! The eddying wind here spun the boat round several times, tangling the anchor chain and Anchor-trip we had set. At 1700, we concluded it wasn't tenable for an overnight so went for an evening run back South across St Brides bay, heading some tide later on, tacking into South Haven Skomer and anchoring at 2029. We wondered why *Lucky T* had anchored much further out of the Shelter of the



bay and cliffs this time. I may be wrong, but I think after visiting Skomer, they had done a circuit of Ramsey

Island using the infamous currents in Ramsey sound that day. *Otter* left the Anchor light off that night in a controlled experiment. There were some bangs and twangs but not as many.

7 Thursday 11/6/2015 Skomer – Grassholm- Neyland 43nm Morning and no sign of any Boat Kill. Anchor Light on = 1 killed, Anchor Light off = 0 Killed. Clear proof that Shearwaters are actually large moths. It became apparent that *Lucky T* had dragged anchor overnight. They were even further out now.

Very conflicting weather forecasts this morning. Local Radio saying Strong Westerly wind, 4-6 and Coastguard VHF saying strong SW 4-5. It was currently neither, being a very slight NE and decreasing from last night. This didn't make a good-sounding forecast for a passage to Grassholm - for *Otter* anyway. We decided to go after a reconfirmation of the MCA forecast of strong SW and noting it was still NE 0-1. *Otter* raised anchor at 1130 and motored East to Grassholm Island for a close-quarter circumnavigation past the rocky hazards and

treacherous currents, races and eddies. We are glad we did. What a sight. The white topping seen from a distance, actually being wall to wall Gannets, one every foot or less. Quite a primaevial sight with them flying overhead and in and out to sea. This was definitely their domain, not ours. Both forecasts were wrong. We didn't have a breath of good sailing wind all day. We didn't mind at all. This sight was one of those once in a lifetime moments. We motor-Sailed way back to Milford Haven and onto Neyland, mooring up at 1915. Both Crews met



up for drinks on the very pleasant Roof-Top Bar overlooking the marina, till way past sunset. We took the hint when the hanging baskets were watered above our heads.

8 Friday 12/6/2015 Neyland – up the Cleddau - Neyland 14Nm

Just time on this morning for a sightseeing cruise up under the Cleddau Bridge and up the river on a rising tide and back on the start of the ebb. *Otter* slipped at 0900 and got up to Picton Point before running out of safe navigable water, returning to Neyland by 1215. Both Crews gathered belongings and dealt with left-over provisions and cleaning, prior to Handover back to Pembrokeshire Cruising at 1400. Fond goodbyes and heading for home.

Total log 287NM 1 Night Hour

All in all, an excellent trip thanks to the Crews, Pembrokeshire Cruising, Neyland Marina and to Alan Mortimore. He put much appreciated effort and enthusiasm into making this particular cruise and pre-sailex briefing successful. And to John Bryant for the back room organisation of the Charters and cruising programme.



PEMBROKESHIRE SAILEX 5th June 2015.

Or
What really happened...
By Jean Bevan

Day 1

We arrived at Neyland Marina

around 4 pm to take over *Lucky Tarte* and *Otter*, our boats for the Sailex. Skippers briefed both boats with change of plan due to big seas

following the gales and the Westerly wind direction. Alan Mortimore, *Lucky Tarte* Skipper, gave us (Gareth Broome, Rowland Charge, David Goodison and myself), a briefing on life jacket, radio, MOB, before setting off under motor for Dale. It was cold and blustery up the channel and we moored on the raft at 11 pm behind *Otter*.

Day 2

Weather forecast Westerly force 5 to 6. We delayed our start to midday to allow time for sea conditions to settle, but nevertheless faced rough seas and big waves, making helming on a close reach hard work. An hour later I became seasick, so was no help with helming and only stopped feeling sick when we reached Lundy Island. Rowland had set a good course and we had made good time, averaging over 6 knots and sailing 40 miles. We saw a pod of around 10 dolphins near the boat but, when Alan went to get his camera, they swam off.

Day 3

Sunny morning and Rowland, David and Gareth went ashore. Lundy Island is owned by the National Trust and kept in contact with the mainland by SS Oldenburg and an airstrip for light aircraft. We left at midday, Gareth setting course for one long tack to Swansea. Superb conditions and a wonderful 6 hour sail. Sunday evening congestion at the Lock was managed by supremely calm lock-master, with a great sense of humour. Delicious dinner prepared by David.

Day 4

Another sunny day, but cold Northerly breeze. Change of plan as wind predicted to turn easterly and we are returning to Dale. Much easier lock manoeuvre with only three boats inside the lock. We had a beautiful sail along the coast and our Skipper is very happy – “this is the life” – he cries! At around 4 pm, a false sense of progress towards Dale was interrupted by a radio call from Castlemartin Firing Practice Range. We are sailing two miles off shore and in the prohibited area. We followed orders and tacked further out to the three mile limit. At around 5 pm we were given the all clear, as they had finished firing.

There was no room on the raft, so we anchored across the bay. Following dinner, the merits of Scotch and Irish whisky were compared and appreciated by all. We have made a small dent in the mountain of food on board, but there are still 6 loaves of bread, 2 bags of potatoes, oranges, apples, cakes, biscuits and enough tins to feed an army. We also have 24 eggs, three packets of bacon and 36 bottles of tonic water – and nobody has had a gin.....

Day 5

Another sunny morning, but again a cold North Easterly wind was blowing. We had a lovely sail to Grasholm. This small, rocky island looks quite ordinary from afar but, drawing closer, the spread of white on the North facing side turns out to be a closely-packed colony of Gannets. We were mesmerised watching the birds wheeling above the masses of birds perched below.

The wind came up as we sailed to Skomer under motor and a reefed mainsail. We anchored in South Haven and found ourselves in a bird paradise, with Puffins, Guillemots and Razorbills, bobbing in the water, perched on the cliffs and flying overhead. We were fascinated, watching the puffins taking off and landing, valiantly flapping their wings to achieve lift off. Another delicious dinner of Chicken curry, prepared by David, finished with tinned pears and custard. A memorable day ended with a quiz compered by Rowland, of guessing the name of the Western from the movie sound track. We were hopeless, despite Rowland’s “helpful” clues.

Day 6

Sailed round to North Haven and spent a few hours on Skomer. Swathes of bluebells, mostly gone over, covered the island, with the seas of blue flowers and their scent, stunning.



Skomer and neighbouring island of Stockholm has the largest known population of Manx Shearwater birds in the world and the Puffin population is the largest in Southern Britain.

It was hot walking on the island but, as soon as we were back on the water, the cold wind returned. The breeze strengthened as we sailed through Ramsey Sound and into St. Brides Bay, beating into the wind. Lovely sail, with the wind behind us and the tide taking us back to South Haven. Anchored up in time for gin and tonics (*at last!! Ed*) and the company of a cheeky gull who settled on the hand rail. More quiz night and more hilarity.

Day 7

Day started at 3 am as *Lucky T* was dragging her anchor and drifting out to sea. The crew were clambering around half-dressed in pyjama shorts and it was freezing cold. Anchor was secured and everyone went back to sleep.



Around 10 am, sailed out to the Smalls Lighthouse. With a light wind, we motored most of the way. Watched squadrons of Shearwaters swooping past, low over the sea and Kittiwakes bobbing in the sea before flying off. We rounded the lighthouse, reflecting on the story of the keeper who went mad..... Sailed to Grasholm, for a second look at the Gannet colony. We sailed back to Neyland, mostly motoring as the wind had dropped. Rafted up next to *Otter* and all had drinks in the bar. Great shower.

Day 8

At 7.30 we motored up the River and had a full cooked breakfast at anchor. Fuel stop and back on pontoon at Neyland Marina at midday. Log showed 262 miles, in a week of great sailing, memorable bird watching, good food and lots of fun and laughter.



TOG 2014 Sailing Programme
Trent Offshore Group
TOG Members and Friends,
23rd February 2014



SEP 12 - SEP 20

SAILEX FULLY BOOKED

CRO 15 Croatia - Split

- Sat, Sep 12, 2015 10:00pm Sun, Sep 20, 2015 2:00pm
- WHERE Croatia - Split

COST - £380

September is time to explore the Mediterranean. Four yachts have been reserved: Three 2015 [Hanse 415](#)'s and a [2015 Hanse 455](#), with 3 or 4 cabins and 2 heads. Cost includes all local "extras" such as end cleaning, transit log and outboard.

The Adriatic coastline with its clear seas, gentle summer climate, quaint villages and historic towns, is a magnificent sailing area, which reveals Croatia as one of Europe's leading bareboat charter destinations.

OCT 6 - OCT 11

SAILEX OPEN FOR BOOKING

EOS 15 The October – End of Season Sailex

- Tue, Oct 6, 2015 5:00pm Sun, Oct 11, 2015 4:00pm
- Port Hamble Marina WHERE - Port Hamble – the South Coast

ESTIMATED COST £265

A great way for us to finish the 2015 season. Weather may be unpredictable but the water temperature is good and the company great. This regular event attracts people to one of the most popular sailing areas in the UK with many options for passage planning and good restaurants

JAN 13 - JAN 31 2015

SAILEX FULLY BOOKED

Caribbean Sailex January 2016.

- Wed, Jan 13, 2016 1:00pm Sun, Jan 31, 2016 2:00pm
- Following a successful charter to the Windward Islands this January - see reports in TOGLINE (Winter Newsletter), we are pleased to offer a Sailex to the Leeward Islands in January 2016.

The area has a rich British, French and Dutch history. There are many islands to visit and 17 days will allow us to explore a small number of islands in this part of the Caribbean.

We have a reservation for two 4 cabin, 3 or 4 head yachts, planning 7 members per yacht. These are both 2013, one an Oceanis 484 and the other an Oceanis 485. Yachts are complete with dinghy, outboard, bed linens and towels, fridge, freezer, and 6Kw Aux power.

TAILPIECE



"Skua" full and byee..... Scotland



Stewart helming – Peter peering....leaving Campbeltown