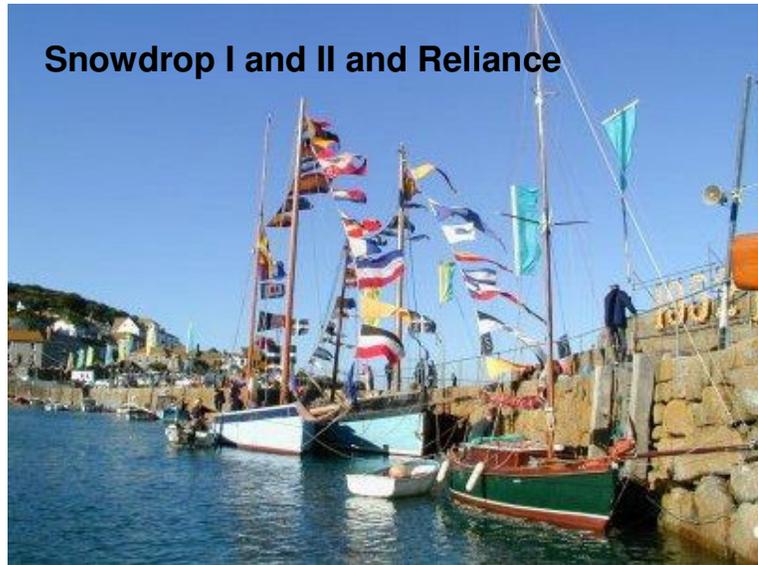


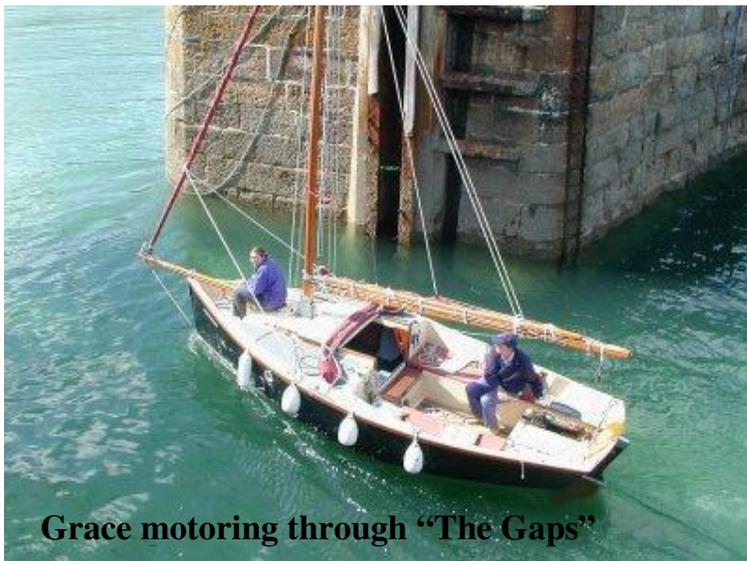
A sail back in time by Jane Benge (433)

When Tom Rickman invited us to Mousehole two years ago we knew little of the 2002 Sea Salt & Sail Festival but gradually our interest grew when Sylvia and Leon Pezzack contacted us. Leon, once a keen gig rower, makes fine crafted oars in his retirement. They both work hard to arrange sponsorship and get as many historic boats there as possible. Also promised over the three days was continuous entertainment including the Cornwall Youth Jazz Orchestra, Cornwall County Choir, Cape Cornwall Singers & Penzance Brass Band.



Snowdrop I and II and Reliance

Originally we planned to sail down with a full contingent on board including my daughter Sarah and her partner James. However, James had the misfortune to break his collarbone the week before so it was decided John and Sarah would sail down stopping overnight at Gillan (Helford). The sun, which we'd hardly seen all summer, couldn't have been more welcome when they arrived in the picturesque inlet for the night. They were joined by Robin Bellairs (594) and Claud Lanyon (598) crewing for Jean and David Cornhill from Southampton on their beautifully restored Crabber "Winkle Too". The weather next day was abysmal, torrential rain and cold but the determined fleet left for the Lizard. Visibility was poor as they motored to the Manacle Buoy but as Lizard Point



Grace motoring through "The Gaps"

hove in sight the rain eased. After a lumpy passage around the Lizard with a fair tide there was an enjoyable sail across Mounts Bay. All managed to reach Mousehole by 14.30 and waited offshore for water in the harbour. Meanwhile my father drove us down to Mousehole to await their arrival. Two 40' Luggers the "Snowdrop" and "Reliance" were moored up to the harbour wall dressed overall and we met Leon on

the Quay who said he hoped twenty-two boats would attend. Leon pointed out

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only half the houses are lived in and most of the second homes are little used. What we miss he said is “Youth” “I would like to show youngsters how to fashion a pair of oars but I cant pay them that much so they’d prefer to work in Tesco”. A microphone announced the arrival of the Shrimpers and Crabber and also mentioned there would be a welcome supper of “Tartiela” – Leon said that’s my neighbour from up country and she tends to go a bit posh on us! Gradually water seeped through the imposing harbour entrance known as “The Gaps” and “Winkle Too” edged through followed by “Grace of St. Just” and “Sea Spray”. Once moored alongside the sun came out and the evening was perfect. I introduced myself to Tom Rickman (Sea Shell Sal-3) on the quayside who later left to cook the visiting crew’s Tatiela Supper (the recipe was stolen by the Spaniards and renamed Paella in 1595 when remnants of the Armada burnt the village to the ground). It was very pleasant sat on board watching boats arrive including “Gannet” a 1954 ships lifeboat adapted to “Beer” lug rig, “Ocean Pride” a 42’ lugger owned by comedian “Jethro’s” brother, the replicated Bounty Launch and a sailing gig from Rame. Eventually hunger got the better of us and we went in search of Tom’s Tatiela, an appetizing dish containing local mussels, shrimps, herbs and potatoes. Small children danced continually to the Jazz Band - no worries about sleeping that night.



The next morning rain returned and after a good breakfast, a meeting with Leon at the local Pilchard Press cafe was on the agenda, but the obligatory “closed” sign hung on the door. We made a dash through the rain for the marquee on the quay and found ourselves joined by Robin Bellairs, two “characters” from the “Reliance” Lugger and the owner of “Butterfly”. We made an incongruous group, us in our branded waterproofs, and the latter in fisherman’s smocks. Leon arrived brandishing a small cannon, “now” he said, pointing at the chart, “the start lines from ‘ere to ere and I’ll lay presently a buoy somewhere in a five mile radius off Newlyn which you’ll leave to port. Proceed to the sailing club marker off Newlyn inner quay and return rounding the Low Lee Buoy and another buoy I shall lay off the St. Clements Isle”. Well that sounded easy enough or did it – what time was the start gun – we had a feeling it would be dreckly. Not a disclaimer form in sight, what strange world had we entered here? As we all left the harbour the course was passed from word to mouth

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and holidaymakers crammed the quay wall to get a glimpse of the older sailing vessels. Eventually we heard a gun, half of us were lost in time cruising around the island, but did it matter?

After a pleasant sail we returned to the anchorage between the harbour and St. Clements and a boat came to collect us for lunch. This is all very civil I thought but my opinion changed when the 20' chain ladder hanging from the end of the quay confronted me! Going up it was one thing but going down was another.



“Spirit of Rame” arriving at low water

Once ashore and enjoying a pasty, John commented how relaxed everyone looked and Robin said it could be fifty years ago. Children played happily on the beach or viewed large tubs containing lobsters, crabs and starfish on the quay. Nearby a man made lobster pots and in another boathouse figureheads were being beautifully fashioned. I had other things on my mind though, how to get back to

the boat without going down the ladder! Eventually we decided to wade out to the water taxi and stand in it until the tide came in, Claud was hoping his “little legs” would get him on board! Not long afterwards the sailing gig “Spirit of Rame” appeared at the entrance and offered to take us out in their beautifully varnished boat which added to the days enjoyment. Lulled by the relaxing Cornish air there was little concern as to which way the next race started.

Jean Cornhill had stayed ashore to video and managed to get prime footage of “The Start”. At around 1.45 p.m. Leon resplendent in yellow oilskins and a white beany hat arrived at the end of the harbour wall accompanied by a young lad and the Mousehole Harbour Master in full regalia. A small cannon was placed strategically on the ground. “Now Leon what time is the start of the race” said the Harbour Master pleased at the gathering crowd of spectators. “Well”, says Leon “I didn’t actually given them a start time but them going up and down do make a wonderful show for the visitors!” Meanwhile over the harbour wall gaffers mingled around the Island and shouts of “what time is the start” and “what’s the course” could be heard over the water. The Lugger had decided not to raise all their sails and had gone even further away from the start line. Ashore the race committee was debating whether to have a 10 or 5 minute gun but decided it wasnt really necessary down in Mousehole. The seconds ticked away and the young lad anxious to do his bit leaned over the

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rails and shouted “get ready” in the loudest voice he could muster just before the gun went off. On the water it was soon realised the local boat “Gannet” seemed to know where to go and all hastily followed in pursuit. The local band struck up, visitors waved from the Quay and the sun shone brightly – ah Leon just perfect!

Later that evening after a meal ashore we watched local Cornish dancing on the quay including the “Turkey Rhubarb” and eventually joined a line dance that wound itself down the Quay. As dusk approached a small group of children appeared carrying lanterns and singing “When lamps are lighted in the town the boats sail out to sea”. After a standing ovation the small group moved to the beach to hear folk tales written and read by Anna Murphy of “Jake” the Pirate and his runaway tattoo called “Marilyn”. The story telling was interspersed by folk songs composed and sung by Sally Crabtree accompanied by Tom Rickman on his cello.

On Sunday, having seen James and Sarah off back to London, we left the harbour at 12.00 and enjoyed another race out into Mounts Bay. John decided to put the sail up in the harbour. The wind was good and we enjoyed tacking across the bay. John had commented earlier to Leon how surprised he was that



Luggers could sail so close winded but Leon said it was obvious as they had to leave the harbour chasing pilchard shoals into the prevailing south westerly winds. We eventually decided to abandon the last buoy and explore the coast a little way up anchoring in Lamorna for lunch. Wet suited divers were wading out to their ribs ready to explore the

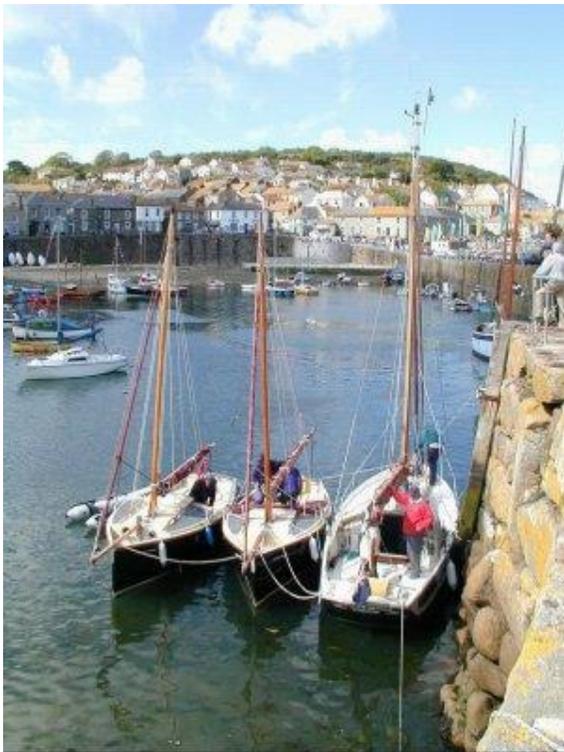
hidden depths off shore. Eventually we returned to Mousehole and were aghast to hear a gun go off as we crossed the finishing line! The relaxed west Cornwall style of racing has much to commend it.

On our return the lifeboat was arriving for the evening service and Tom was seen sculling his wooden Shrimper “Sea Shell Sal” back to its mooring on the evening tide. The service ended with three cheers for the lifeboat’s crew and Claude and Sheila’s dog Polly crowned it all by an added three barks at a

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poignant moment which caused much laughter. Jean kindly cooked us a Pasta Supper and we all agreed it had been a great weekend and well worth attending. Shortly afterwards we heard the organisers thanking Shrimpers for attending the event over the tannoy. We said our goodbyes and thanks to Leon & Sylvia in the boathouse before winding our way back through the narrow streets. By this time the choir had found the pub and the beautiful strain of Cornish voices could be heard over the water.

We planned to sail at 0700 the following day, Mrs Waters had insisted on getting up early and giving us breakfast “nobody leaves ere without having their breakfast, I'd get up at 3 o'clock if necessary”. At £16 a night who could fault that.



Passage home across Mounts Bay was accomplished with a slight north westerly breeze on the beam. We arrived at the Lizard at slack water and saw a Puffin float by us. After rounding the point we sailed on for a short while but eventually as wind and tide headed us we had to motor the rest of the way to Falmouth. On passing the Manacle Buoy we estimated the foul tide at 2.1/2 knots with the wind freshening all the time.

Overall we felt this was an event that suited Shrimpers very well, a relaxed atmosphere, good food and traditional type low key entertainment. Our thanks to Tom for inviting us and the Mousehole Committee for all their hard work in arranging this wonderful festival.

The next Sea, Salt and Sail Festival will be held in 2004