

Shrimper Week had been foremost in our thoughts for many months. John Clogg, as East Coast Secretary, was chiefly responsible for the event, but we had been co-opted as chief assistants and advisers! Rob had been put in charge of arrangements for the racing, for the nights at Felixstowe, Orford and Aldeburgh, and the production of relevant charts and diagrams for the entrances to the rivers. There had also been frantic activity at our pottery evening class as Rob had decided to present each entrant with an individualised pottery bowl bearing a Shrimper/Sail No. on the base. A nautical crossword was contrived, and a very cold, wet, windy weekend was spent finding clues for the nautical quest - though we did reach 8 knots sailing from the river Ore to Deben! The telephone lines were humming between Woodbridge and Surbiton as we discussed our latest brilliant ideas, successes with arrangements (and failures!).

Everything slowly took shape, and Jackie, John, Rob and I had a final get together early in June. The presentation pack was agreed; we admired their wonderful antiqued ancient charts, beribboned and sealed, and they admired Rob's bowls safely packed in their boxes with tissue paper and pink sweetie shrimps. We also sampled the barrel of French orange wine, which we'd made from a recipe given to us during Shrimper Week and Brest 2000, and which we planned to dish out at the final dinner aboard the barge. All was as prepared as it could be. All rested upon the weather. Contingency plans had been set up, but wind and rain on the East Coast could lead to a disastrous week: sunshine and zephyrs and it could be wonderful.

Friday 22nd June dawned hot and sunny in Surbiton, and the forecast for the whole country was good. We left home after lunch, towing "Bumble Chugger", and arrived late afternoon to a very cold and cloudy Felixstowe. We launched "Bumble Chugger" on Saturday Morning and just as we were setting off for Levington we noticed another Shrimper sail a little way up the river and it looked as if they were in difficulties. As we got nearer we found John Passmore in "Cotehele" (63), his engine had packed up due to poor fuel, and the flood into the Deben was too strong to sail against with the lightish wind. We took him in tow until we were beyond the Deben Bar, and then we both set sail for Levington. As we entered the Orwell and headed towards Levington Marina where the Shrimpers were launching, it was as if we had managed to wave our magic wand - the clouds started to break up, patches of blue sky appeared and the sun shone. The weather had decided to smile kindly upon Shrimper Week 2001!

As it was lunchtime we decided to sail on up the river to Pin Mill. We found another 5 or 6 boats already moored there, and we met up with old friends at the Butt and Oyster for lunch. After lunch some of us set off for a walk to the Cat House at Wolverston. Ted was worried about the tide going down, as his boat was moored further inshore than the rest and he'd heard of the dreaded Pin Mill mud! We assured him that he should be all right for a couple of hours, and seven of us set off. (I'm afraid that was the last we saw of Ted and Robert for some considerable time!) Rob and I turned back quite soon, as we wanted to get to Levington in good time to check arrangements for the evening. We found our allocated

berth in the marina - we were next to Patty Shone and Carla Vasa in Hunakai (229) who had just returned from an exciting sail up the Caledonian Canal. We did our checking, tidied up and met at the Harwich Yacht Club in the converted lightship. They gave us a good meal, which was interspersed with briefings for the week, accounts of battles between the Dutch and English in the 16th Century, the presentation of John's very ancient blood-stained charts, a welcome speech to the thirteen Dutch participants and a very hearty rendering of 'Rule Britannia'. This was followed by a speech from the Dutch, and a presentation to Rob and John of very nice little brass 'Captain's Table' hand bells. An excellent evening, though I felt worse and worse as the evening progressed - no sign of Ted and Robert!

I felt a bit fragile on Sunday morning, but after a restorative shower we felt strong enough for a cooked breakfast, so Rob did us tasty platefuls of egg, bacon and mushrooms. We went on a hunt for "Kittiwake" (520) and found her moored near the marina entrance. Ted and Robert had got off the mud about one in the morning and were most magnanimous in accepting our abject apologies. We joined the rest of the fleet leaving the marina, and headed out of Harwich Harbour in the sunshine. There was a lot of traffic in the harbour - big container ships, passenger ferries to Parkstone Quay and the Stena Line 'monster': they probably weren't too happy with 32 little brown-sailed Shrimpers nipping across their lanes!

We headed south along the coast



towards Walton Backwaters, where the fleet split up to do their own exploring. We sailed up Hamford Water and into Bramble Creek. It was fairly low water with a lot of mud exposed at the sides, and we came across one bank with 6 or 7 large seals basking in the sun. Four of them lumbered back into the water with a lot of splashing and spray as we passed by - the others were too lazy to move. We passed several more swimming around, they kept popping up beside the boat, following us quite a way. One had a tiny pup with her. We returned down Hamford Water with a brisk breeze, and across to Stone Point where a long line of 24 Shrimpers were already anchored along the sandy beach. We rafted up to the end of the line for our lunch, and exchanged wine and chocolate biscuits with "Jebedee" (119). We spent the afternoon exploring the Backwaters, which included some fairly fraught moments round Skippers Island when we touched bottom and were not sure that we would be able to get free. In the late afternoon we returned to The Twizzle and tied up in Titchmarsh

Marina. Andrew Fitzgerald was on his own for the evening, so we invited him for supper on board. Most of the crews spent the evening at the marina restaurant, but we had an excellent supper of tuna and pasta, followed by gingerbread and biscuits and cheese.

Another lovely sunny day on Monday and we all went ashore at 8 am for a briefing by Charles Boughton on the afternoon's racing. Holbrook School had offered to be responsible for the arrangements for the races, and the course was set in the River Stour. It took us until lunch time to sail round there - a good sail with the balloon jib flying - and we had a quick lunch anchored to the shore. Then all keyed up and in racing mode, we joined the 25 other Shrimpers lining up for the start, which included four boats from the School.



Overall results for three races were Martin Pumphrey (830) and us with a 1st and 2nd each, with final position decided on our discards - we had a 3rd and Martin had a 5th! Very exciting, nail-biting racing! The School had organised the racing absolutely impeccably, with the races being started and finished like clockwork. As we left we gave Mike Hart a shrimper bowl as a thank you. We then set sail for Shotley Point Marina. We were the last of the fleet to arrive and went through the lock with the three school boats. It lifted us high above sea level, and disgorged us into the usual maze of white shiny plastic hulls.

Having tied ourselves up to "Clementine" (849), we tidied up and boarded "Albert" (488) with our bottles of gin and tonic, to have drinks with John, Malcolm, Sue, Barry and Carol. After a while we all wandered off through the marina and along the front to the Bristol Arms, picking up various other groups of Shrimpers on the way. Another very good fish and chip meal with plenty of wine flowing.

There was a brisk wind blowing as we set out through Shotley Marina lock on Tuesday morning, and about 22 Shrimpers set off up the coast through lumpy seas to Felixstowe Ferry. We checked some of the quest clue answers on the way and with a little help from the engine through the flood tide round Cobbold's Point, we crossed the bar into the Deben at about midday with the tide now with us.

A few Shrimpers were already moored at the Ferry and several more never got beyond that point. It was a shame they didn't see more of the Deben. We sailed on and anchored at The Rocks together with "Emily Ann" where we had lunch. Half a dozen more Shrimpers passed us - some got to Woodbridge and the others to Waldringfield. On the radio we heard that John Clogg's brand new engine, the replacement to the one that broke down in France, had broken down, and he was moored at Ramsholt with Trevor busy trying to make repairs. We set off for a walk along the river wall to Ramsholt. The shore at Ramsholt Rocks is rather obstructed at one end with two large trees blown down over the beach. It was a very hot walk with a nice hot summery smell. We heard a cuckoo and there were many little birds

flying among the reeds, maybe reed buntings, and a field full of horses and a little foal. The area inland of the path has been cleared and tidied and looks as if it may be a nature reserve.

On our return we passed John at Ramsholt, on the move again and very relieved that Trevor had fixed his engine. Plenty of extra buoys had been put out for us, and the ferry boat came out and picked us all up to take us ashore for the dinner. Viv and Pete had laid up the tables with blue napkins and yellow candles, and it all looked very nice. We had invited Betty Smith to the dinner as past Commodore of the Club, and Peter and Mary Wain. We sat at a table with them, John (Harbour Master), and Ann White, who had been at the bar and had been very pleased to be invited to join us. A very good meal of seafood salad followed by roast beef and Yorkshire puddings, and then a selection of tasty puds. Towards the end of the meal Rob gave out his kylix bowls - everyone seemed very pleased with their personalised gift! At the end of the evening we wandered out to the jetty, to be ferried back to our boats by Duncan. The night became spectacular with a huge thunderstorm. There was not a lot of rain, but the thunder crashed and the lightening lit up the sky.

Wednesday. We woke to a morning of low grey cloud and general murk, but as we sailed up the coast, the clouds lifted and we had sun and a brisk wind. We reached Shingle Street just before the flood started, and a group of five of us made our way up the Ore. We diverted up the River Butley for our lunch and continued on up to Aldeburgh. We continued on up past Ikon, where we passed John Passmore, moored and waiting for a bit more water, and a bit further on the Pumphreys and Mark Osborn. We continued our winding course between the withies in great danger of going aground on the mud with Mark following on behind. We managed to reach Snape and moored up for a brief visit ashore before turning to Aldeburgh. On arrival we found the boats had picked up moorings, and rafted up 2 or 3 boats to a buoy, on the bend above the Club house. The ferry boat was just doing the rounds, and after a quick tidy up we went ashore for the evening.

Still reasonable weather on Thursday, but a steadily increasing wind. It was a good day for pottering so we sailed down to Orford and picked up a buoy. Once ashore we did some shopping, and ate an ice cream sitting in the sun of Orford's square. We had lunch on board and then relaxed, snoozing and listening to Wimbledon. A few waves of rain came over, and Rob did a quick rush ashore to organise the ferry boats for the evening and get the key to the Sailing Club. Mark (245) and Peter Shore (203) decided the weather was not going to be good getting out of the river, and they spent the day collecting their trailers, and used the slipway at Orford to get their boats out. Our evening sortie ashore with 25 or so others took us to the King's Head in the village. Having had a drink there we split up into groups for eating.

We did a quick trip back to Orford on Friday morning, with the wind beginning to rise again. Rob opened up the Sailing Club in readiness for those who wanted to make use of the loos and showers, put something in their contribution box and locked up when everyone had left. We set off nearly last of the fleet carried down by the ebb heading straight into the strong

wind, which meant plenty of tacking across the river. “Kittiwake” was in front of us and we were concerned to see her getting caught on the mud on one of her tacks. We reached them just a few minutes later, but already they were well and truly stuck with the water receding fast, and there was nothing we could do to help. We carried on with six of the fleet, very wary of the advancing muddy banks, and a bit concerned about what the sea would be like going out over the bar. In fact there was no problem, and we had an uneventful trip down the coast, overtaking the boats that had been well ahead of us by sailing closer to the shore. We returned to our former berth in Levington Marina and were soon summoned to “Clementine” for a drink and nibbles with Barry and Carol, with several other crews, and there was general celebration and congratulations on a very successful week.

Soon after six a Thames Barge sailed down from Pin Mill and anchored a little way downstream from the marina. Rob and several other Shrimpers did a shuttle service over to the barge. The plan had been to give everyone a welcoming tot of our home brewed French recipe orange wine. Unfortunately the barrel got left behind on the pontoon, and by the time Rob had done the trip to retrieve it, most people had already bought drinks from the bar, and soon food was served in the main cabin: a very good buffet meal. All round the cabin were photographs on view that had been taken during the racing on the River Stour. Following coffee Barry made his speeches, announcing the winner of the nautical quest and crossword. These had been very conclusively won by Ted and Robert, who were unfortunately sitting on the mud and missing yet another good dinner! The response to the competition had been very poor: I don't think we'd made it clear at the beginning of the week that it was a competition. Then there were the thanks for the organisers, and Rob and John were presented with a bottle of whisky each, and there were bottles of champagne for Jackie and me. The barrel was produced then, but didn't have the impact it might have had. Rob had to disappear to ferry all the School group ashore, and then everyone else started leaving. I got a lift back with Trevor, and was unable to stop Rob rushing back in the dark for a third time, to collect me and the barrel and his whisky!



Saturday morning we were pottering in a relaxed way when we noticed the barge race from Pin Mill had started. We couldn't get a good view over the marina walls, so we jumped aboard “Bumble Chugger” and followed them out through Harwich Harbour. It was a very fine sight

with 13 Thames barges taking part, and many other gaff rigged boats.

Nice reminders of Shrimper Week continued for some time, with kind thank you letters and photos, very appreciative of the organisation of the week - everyone seemed to have enjoyed themselves very much.

And the last word goes to Ted and Robert!!!!

We had two very good opportunities to investigate the shrimp population of East Anglia rivers in June. Isn't that just what Shrimpers were designed for? What surprised me was the fact that other Shrimper Owners felt more in need of gathering together and eating and drinking and having much merry making – while we were studying the simple Shrimp. Our task took about six hours and we got very muddy. It was a very successful study and the results will be published in due course. (Note any suggestion that Kittiwake's grounding on the mud at Pin Mill and Orford was due to skipper malfunction is totally erroneous).

