



AQUARIUS S.C.

THE MAIN SHEET

Summer 2007 Edition

Web Site: <http://www.sailaquarius.org.uk>
Email: mail@sailaquarius.org.uk

Editor: Richard Cannon 01932 786636
E-mail: editor@sailaquarius.org.uk

Publicity: Over Easy 020 8393 5495 E-mail: publicity@sailaquarius.org.uk

The Commodore writes..... Nigel Knowles

As I write this it is a lovely sunny evening with a gentle breeze from the west - just the sort of evening we had in mind for the "twilight cruise" up to the Magpie at Sunbury.

In the event it was showers accompanied by a very fluky light wind and an exceptionally strong steam! Is it surprising that we have a reputation for being preoccupied about the weather?

Conditions for the regatta week end were equally dreadful. We had been hoping for sunshine and steady winds in the daytime and a balmy sunny evening. As it happened we had changeable winds accompanied by torrential showers! Nonetheless 75 hardy souls enjoyed the hog roast on the Saturday evening and we managed to provide shelter for everyone!

On the Sunday the weather moderated a little but the combination of light winds and intermittent showers made for poor racing. The traditional strawberry tea however was as popular as ever!

Earlier in the season the weather for our bi-annual trip to Bewl was similarly disappointing with a strong cold northerly wind (those who did venture forth are being considered for a polar/foolhardiness medal!).

One week later we had a real drifter with boats having to be towed back to the Club! And these extremes have been typical; we've had some great sailing and some which has been awful. There have also been a number of incidents that are excellent candidates for the water rat trophy!

The variable weather has not kept members away and it has been good to see the Club fairly humming at times. A lot of useful tidying up was done at the work party on 5 May - thanks to all who attended and especially to Diana and Peter who provided the added incentive of a free lunch!

The open week-end a week later was, quite literally, a wash out! Not surprisingly we had very few visitors but those that did come were greeted by a good number of Club members who seemed to enjoy the opportunity to natter without the pressure of feeling they should do something else!

Visitors and passers-by in recent weeks might be forgiven for thinking that the Club has lost track of its raison d'être. Whilst sailing activity has been evident on Sundays, during the week the principal activity appears to have been some fairly serious DIY as the make-over of the patio area has taken form. Happily this work is nearing completion and we can start to enjoy the benefits. Also Bodgit & Co's collection of big boys DIY tools will no longer clutter the Clubhouse!

With the completion of most of the major work and tidying up of the Clubroom, this is perhaps an opportunity to suggest that the majority of members want to keep it reasonably tidy, clean and welcoming. I hope we never get to the stage of issuing a "dress-code" for the Club premises, but I do suggest that if you have been in the river, then it is inappropriate to be sitting in the Clubroom in dripping wet attire! Please keep wet gear as far as possible to the changing rooms. Can I also suggest that bicycles are not brought onto the patio - shortly we will have some bars re-installed to which they can be secured

The "opening" of the enlarged patio area, coinciding with a hog-roast on the Saturday evening of the regatta weekend, was also an occasion to acknowledge formally a splendid outdoor bench generously given to the Club by Don Babb in memory of Pat Shore, who was a member and Water Board representative over many years. - Thank you Don! When we finally complete the patio it is intended that the bench will grace the river end.

I also draw your attention to the "RNLI fund raising sail" on 5 August. This is really a social occasion when we will take 2 Club lasers, sailed by a relay of volunteers, accompanied by a flotilla of cruisers down river as far as practicable, and raise money for the RNLI on the way. The event was a regular Club event 20 or so years ago and hopefully will prove equally popular this year.

Good sailing!!

Start of Season Party 17 March

The evening got underway around 7:45p.m. It rapidly became apparent that it was not going to be as well attended as in past years, which was somewhat disappointing given the effort that had been put into it by Mike Baker, Rodger and Linda Wheeler and others.

At 8:00p.m. Nigel welcomed everybody and then introduced a presentation by Mike (Over Easy) Baker on "The history of our part of the River".

Mike had had done a lot of research which started 30 million years ago although most was since the building of Hampton Court Palace and the Bridge. Much was on the land marks, islands and the personalities involved with the river.

Mike's talk was illustrated by a slide show of well over a hundred pictures assembled into suitable format by Richard Cannon. They were projected by Nigel Knowles on a large screen presented to the club by Tony Hopkins.

For those who missed the evening a video DVD of it is available from Richard Cannon.

This presentation lasted about an hour and was followed by one of the best cold buffets we've ever had at Aquarius.

The evening, for those who made it, was a great success and everybody's thanks go to R & L and Janet Edwards for all their work before and on the evening.

Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members.

Robert Boan; Michael and Jean Hendra

Ian, Lesley, James, and Alex McLaren-Morris

Dan Szabunia and Eraine Moris

Wishing them a happy and successful membership of Aquarius.

Joan Bray

Club Improvement Updates

The patio extension continues apace. The new entrance steps have been constructed and the shuttering removed.. That phase was incredibly labour intensive. Five trailer loads of earth and ballast were removed to create the space for the steps. An almost equal amount of ballast and cement had then to be moved to the workings and mixed. The shuttering was constructed in the clubhouse and just to make it interesting the step plan/rise was elliptical. Because of the concrete volumes involved the steps were poured two at a time (two risers and two treads) over four days to reach the patio deck level of approximately 6ft.

Meanwhile the race control hut electrics were taken out and the building moved onto the existing patio where it stayed until the new patio deck was laid. Before the shuttering was dismantled a rather clever laminated hand rail was also made using the shuttering as a former. Several layers of thin wood strips were glued together to form the required curve and drop and were then clamped for several days to go off. I think, above anything else, this was the cleverest part of the whole construction. See what you think when you see it.

On Monday 2 April the steel work prep started. This was where the girders from the Surbiton factory came into play. Handling these let alone cutting and drilling them was heavy work and progress slowed down quite a bit. Eventually 'the boss' declared himself satisfied and Keith Poncia was called in to do the welding needed to attach brackets and plates to the girders required for final assembly. That took best part of a day and as each section was finished it was taken away, cleaned and painted.

The following assembly started. This was the hardest part. Each girder had to be lifted up some 6 feet, located into its exact position and bolted down. Would everything go together as planned? By and large it did and where it was perhaps a little tight it got 'bodgitted' until it did fit.

By the time this phase of the job was completed we'd burnt out three angle grinders and the massive chop saw used to cut up the girders. I lost count of the number of cutting disks and wire cup brushes we got through.

In the middle of all this a lorry turned up with the redwood patio decking and dumped it all in the car park.

Next shuttering was constructed along the back of the patio and down the new staircase. Concrete was then poured into the void between the shuttering and the bank. This strengthened the bank and ensured that it would not collapse onto the new construction as a whole. These walls will be topped with coping stones to match similar ones used on the top patio above.

On Friday 20 May the decking was cut to length and work started laying it across the steelwork. To fix it down it was decided to add wooden battens down one side of each girder so that the supplied clips could attach the decking to the support beams (somewhat fundamental).

The decking across the new patio extension was finally finished on the following Thursday and work started immediately on the patio handrails. The next job was the handrail for the new steps and to start panelling in the sides of the patio down to ground level.

Bodgitt Senior got the staircase handrail while yours truly got to cut down the double garage door to the right size. I have never drilled out and reset so many pop rivets in my life. These tasks were done in the pouring rain, why I hear you ask? Good question and I guess the answer was that they needed to be finished before the Open Weekend.

Now all we need is another double and a single garage door, or three singles to complete the under patio paneling. On Monday 7th May work started on extending the decking across the existing concrete patio but first bearers had to be laid and levelled. By the following night the decking was up to the clubhouse and attention turned to completion of the river frontage handrail.

I think we are beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel!

On behalf of Bodgitt & Son



Mid-Thames Trophy 28 April

The Mid-Thames Trophy is an annual inter-club event for Aquarius, Desborough, Hampton, Littleton, and Staines sailing clubs.

This year's event was hosted by Desborough S.C. Desborough is located off Ferry Lane at Shepperton in very picturesque surroundings opposite Shepperton Church Square. It has extensive grounds, mostly grassed and a spacious two story clubhouse.

A total of twenty-three entered for the 2007 MTT. Littleton SC entered one boat. Staines SC entered two boats. Aquarius SC entered four boats, Desborough SC entered six boats and Hampton SC a whopping ten boats. No prizes therefore for guessing who won.

Three races were run over a classic 'Olympic' course of tri-angles and sausages. Due to the large entry each race had two flights; Lasers, Enterprises and Merlins being in the first flight. For the first race all marks were to Starboard. The second and third races all marks were to Port.

Unfortunately the wind was very light and from the South; their worst direction. It was extremely patchy and fluky and often there were large clusters of near stationary boats at the marks. It was strange that it could be beneficial to be right in close to the tall trees at the windward bank where you wouldn't think there would be any wind.

Hampton's Merlin Rockets and Enterprises swept all before them. They won the Mid Thames Trophy and three of their boats took the first three individual places.

They might have had the top five places but the solitary Littleton SC entry, a Solo, stole the 4th individual place. Desborough SC came second in the MTT. Aquarius came third. Staines came forth and Littleton came fifth.

Many thanks to Desborough SC for a thoroughly enjoyable day, their hospitality; organisation and catering were second to none.

Next year's MTT host club will be Hampton and judging by their 2007 performance they will not be planning to relinquish the MTT without one hell of a fight.

Mike (Over Easy) Baker

Working Party 5 May

The early May working party is always aimed at getting Aquarius SC looking its best for the annual Open Weekend.

The unusually hot weather this year meant that the grass really needed strimming and there was a lot of weeding to do. The tables, chairs and windows needed washing and the kitchen, changing rooms, toilets and shower needed cleaning.

Outside, the area under the new patio needed clearing. Earth, concrete and organic material was transferred up to the car park; a lot of very heavy paving slabs were neatly stacked and the timber, much of which was still required to finish our new patio, was stacked ready for use.

All the accumulated spider webs on the outside of the club were swept away.

Meanwhile four strimmers were in use cutting back the grass in the car park area, down the ramp and across the bund to the clubhouse. They then continued up the bank, around the boats to the far end.

Diana and Pete Carpenter supplied a great lunch including baked potatoes, meat sauce, salad and French bread followed by a cup of Pete's excellent coffee. Outstanding!

On the Commodores behalf I would like to thank the twenty members who turned up and really got stuck into a lot of hard work. Your efforts made an incredible difference to the place. It now looks smart, inviting and somewhere any of us should be proud to welcome potential new members to.

A big pat on the back to:- George & Joan Bray, Peter & Diana Carpenter, Joan Walkden, Pat Irving, Tony Adcock, Tony Hopkins, Richard Cannon, Eric Bridgewater, John Neale, Jan Morris, Simon, Oonie, Hannah, Robbie & Dominic Lunniss, Bryan Clements, Michael, Ben & Ellie Chippis, Joan & Gordon Courtney, Graham Thompson, Laurie Bridges, and me, Over Easy.

Mike (Over Easy) Baker

Club Open Weekend 12/13 May

Aquarius's recruitment during 2006 was very good with much of it stemming from the annual open weekend.

For 2007 once the flyers, newspaper and radio ads were taken care of attention turned to the club itself. A working party had been arranged for the prior weekend to spruce the place up a bit.

By 10:30am on the 12th Over Easy was rigged ready to take visitors out for a sail. Tea and coffee was 'on the go' and the gates were open. At this point it always goes very quiet and you could be forgiven for wondering if anybody was going to turn up.

2007 was no different; mind you the weather was awful. Intermittent rain and strong winds meant it was not a day to take first timers out on the water.

Around lunch time one couple with a four year old turned up but didn't stay very long. During the afternoon another couple of families and couples turned up. I would class them all as maybes, time will tell.

Late afternoon the weather improved a little and one couple ventured out in the safety boat. That obviously whetted their appetites and the next thing they were out in a Bosun with Graham.

The 13th was more of the same weather-wise with rain, wind plus the added bonus of thunder and lightning; just the stuff for a public open weekend.

Sunday was also a fun racing day with Joan and George in the box and yours truly in the safety boat. I think two or three couples looked in but I guess the river and the club on a wet day was not a pleasing combination and with one exception they didn't stay around very long.

Strangely when the racing did start just after midday there was no lack of entries. I think we had six or seven boats out for each of the three races.

As open days go I've seen better but you can't win them all. Many thanks to Pete, Diana and Pat for handling the catering, to Joan & George and to everybody who took someone afloat over the weekend. It was much appreciated.

Mike (Publicity Walla)
Baker

Bewl Valley SC 27/28 May 2007

For many years now Aquarius members have gone down to Bewl Water in Kent at the late May Bank Holiday for some 'open water' sailing.

Bewl Valley SC run an all comers open programme over Sunday and Monday and we usually enter some of our boats in these events.

Last year Keith and I won the 'Ton Up' trophy in Over Easy. I couldn't make this year but I trust that Richard co-opted someone to get the old quill pen PC out and record events for posterity.

First Sailing Day of the 2007 Season 25 March

Six boats including three Bosuns, two Lasers and a SigneT 'signed on' for the first days racing of the 2007 season.

The day started in the clubhouse with a shore based refresher training session organised for our newer members by Mike Baker. Interestingly this seemed to have attracted more than just newcomers by the time it ended.

Following this Tony Hopkins and Hanna Luniss rigged the Pico and Laser Radial and went for a sail under the watchful eye of Richard in the Patrol boat.

The conditions were a bit gusty and it wasn't long before the Pico was on its side. Tony did a sterling job in righting her but after going over again a few minutes later he came in.

Hanna meanwhile had her hands full in the Laser Radial and also opted to come ashore before also going for an early bath. A case of discretion being the better part of valour.

The afternoon's racing under Laurie Bridge's organisation was fast and furious with Charles Dennis and Pat Halling in their Lasers racking up early entries for the capsize trophy.

The clubhouse seemed very crowded come tea time. Unfortunately this event has always proved to be more popular than the actual sailing. Maybe we should organise things so tea and cakes are served afloat in future! Still, all in all, it was good to be on the water again.

Mike (Over Easy) Baker

Great Expectations - Tony Hopkins

Seeing the "Bewl Valley Sailing Club Spring Open Regatta, Open Pursuit races" in the 2007 club sailing program gave me great expectations of a real insight into sailing and racing on a large scale.

Well 7.30am on Bank holiday Monday morning I was knocking on Richard Cannon's front door to get an early start for the drive to Bewl as Richard had asked me to crew for him.

Also making the annual pilgrimage to Bewl were Simon Lunniss and his daughter Hanna and family, with the Club Pico on the car roof, and Richard's long time crew Robert accompanied by his girlfriend.

The weather was not good with plenty of rain, strong winds and extremely cold; With a temperature of 8°C, reduced to 4°C with wind chill it was more like mid winter.

We arrived at Bewl by about 9.15am and racing was due to start at 11.00am. The launching area was deserted and there was not the hustle and bustle I had expected from an open regatta at such a large venue.

We started to get the Signet ready to launch when the OOD arrived and calmly told us that racing was cancelled due to bad communications and that nobody was available to staff the event!! I would have liked to have experienced racing amongst many boats on a large bit of

water with strong winds but with the conditions Richard was relieved he didn't have to race, the Lunnisses were only intending to play with the Pico anyway.

We retired to the club house for coffee and bacon sandwiches and to discuss what to do next. Over coffee the OOD said that the safety boats would be out and we could still sail.

We rigged the Signet and set off, the North wind was fairly strong (15 to gust 30 mph) but very changeable and the burgee must have gotten dizzy!; this had made it very difficult rigging because it wasn't head to wind for more than a few seconds at a time (more like Aquarius).

After about an hour of some very demanding helming I could see Richard going blue so we headed to back to thaw out and get some lunch (capsizes nil as Richard was too nervous to trust me with the helm in the difficult conditions).

While we had been sailing Simon and Anna had been out in the Pico and had an interesting time including capsizes!

We were going to go out again after lunch but the safety boats had been put away so we had hot showers and packed away the dinghies and headed home.

For the whole period we were there only 2 other boats and 1 wind surfer sailed. Not the Bewl and end all of sailing that I was expecting.

Jazz & Hog Roast - Evening of Sat 23 June

Two changes this year. Due to the cost there was no live jazz band and some of the saving was invested in a hog roast replacing the typical BBQ.

The cost of live jazz has skyrocketed over the last two or three years to the point where it can no longer be justified. We still had jazz but via a sound system provided by Rodger Wheeler, including vinyl records, and as people always tend to talk through the music anyway I'm not sure lack of 'live' music was any great loss.

The hog roast was a very pleasant change and seemed to go down very well with the 75 people who attended. The hog was supplied, ready prepared and mounted on a rotisserie. Cooking time was 4 to 5 hours and Bodgitt & Son (Catering Division) ensured that it was cooked to perfection. They were, of course, suitably lubricated while slaving over the hot rotisserie with pints of the Hogs Back Brewery best collected by Peter Carpenter earlier in the week.

This year Pete was ably assisted in the bar by Joan Walkden who was in charge of a large punch bowl of Pimm's No.1 which seemed to hit the mark with the Aquarius ladies.

Our new patio really came into its own providing more than enough space for everyone who wanted to dine 'al fresco' although earlier in the day Nigel and the team had erected a large gazebo on the patio deck on the assumption it might be wet, which it was. One exited the lounge into a very large covered area so the continuous rain was hardly noticed.

A whole range of salads had been prepared by members of the Social & Management Committee's ensuring that there was something for everybody, including our younger members.

After everybody had eaten our club President George Bray formally opened the new patio and also thanked Donald Babs for the handsome teak bench donated to the club in memory of Pat Shore.

Mike (Over Easy) Baker

Fun & Games with a Dory

We (David Jennings & I) first looked at the Dory in the trailer park. We noticed that the hull had been damaged and repaired. The repair looked OK. Next we noticed that the motor lower bearing bracket was broken.

By dint of the model and serial number an Internet search elicited 1984 as the year of manufacture. A further search revealed a source of handbooks for a wide range of Johnson/Evinrude outboards. A copy was ordered for the Club.

The Dory was moved next to the clubhouse. Bryan repaired a small leak in the hull and we bought and fitted a new bracket.

It was felt by many that 35HP was hazardously overkill for a second patrol boat but a lengthy search for a replacement of around 10HP at a reasonable price was fruitless.

Came the moment of truth when we tried it out on the water. The motor started and ticked-over nicely. However, the throttle control was stiff and hair-triggered. Advancing it quite gingerly resulted in a massive surge of power such that had it been pointing that way we could have ended up on the bank! (or do I exaggerate slightly).

The other problem was that the steering was very stiff, making directional control difficult. The stiffness turned out to be in the Morse cable, which was removed in an attempt to free it up. All we succeeded in doing was to make it worse - it was impossible to remove the inner as it is crimped at both ends. Another trip to Lindon Lewis for a new one.

Then came the job of fitting it. This appeared to need at least three hands where there is room for only one and no way to see what one is doing. However, we succeeded in the end (or thought we had) and we tried it out - bingo - big improvement - only to discover later that the cable outer came adrift from the steering box when turning hard to the right.

Back to the drawing board, we found that one of the fixing bolts had to be routed through a notch on the end of the cable outer. Two hours of "keyhole surgery" later it was done. In the process, I gained an eighth of an inch of tar on my shoes from the bitumastic paint (I wonder who did that!) which had melted in the hot sun.

Peter must take the credit for the most significant modification to the throttle response. He made, developed and fitted bracketry at the motor end in such a way that a given movement of the control arm now results in a much reduced motion at the motor. This has achieved a remarkable improvement in controllability.

At higher speeds the Dory adopts a bow-up attitude. This has been countered, to a large extent, by tilting the motor.

Further traumas include the magic disappearance of the ignition key (the spare Mike had cut came to the rescue) and intermittent operation of the starter solenoid, which occasionally needs a well directed tap to make it behave.

Laurie (Noddy) Bridges

Indoor Olympics 21 April

Don't know where this came from as no one on the Social Committee could remember who suggested it in the first place. However, some twenty people turned up to compete.

Basically tiddlee-winks became the high jump. Shove Halfpenny became the long jump. Darts became the Javelin. I'm not sure what Jenga represented but it was a lot of fun.

Pete Carpenter and Mike Rogers supplied a very good BBQ and the best team won the Bodgitt Trophy. This should have had five Olympic rings set on a patio girder offcut but in true Bodgitt fashion; one fell off before it could be presented.

Many thanks to Nigel for organising the AQSC Olympics it was a good evening. Perhaps next time we could have hammer throwing or first to change a chop saw blade or ten times up and down to the car park pushing a wheelbarrow full of ballast. Just a thought?

Mike (Over Easy) Baker



Jazz/Hog Roast Pictures



Back on 'Freetime of Hamble'

It was just after Xmas that Lyn's cousin Paul called to see if I was available to crew 'Freetime' down to Plymouth at the end of May where she will spend the Summer. Well, after last years trip around the Channel Islands, reported in this newsletter, I wasn't going to turn him down was I?

Unfortunately Paul's other crew choice couldn't make it on medical grounds so, no other crew being available; we decided to take her down on our own. It just means there's more to do. However less people means more beer to go around, there's always an upside.

For those of you that didn't catch my last 'Freetime' article Paul's yacht is a 33ft. Westerly 330 Regatta which is similar to the Westerly Storm in that both have GRP hull, deck and superstructure, fin keel, spade rudder and tiller steering but the Regatta has a much more luxurious interior and a fractional rig. The silent crew member is George. He's the auto pilot who, if connected, can steer a bearing very accurately.

Freetime



The trip promised late starts and late arrivals because of the prevailing neap tides. Neap tides are especially weak tides, typically 10 to 30% less than normal, occurring during quarter moons when the gravitational forces of the Moon and the Sun are perpendicular to one another. Right, enough of the science bit even though it did have a direct bearing on tide tables and navigation used during the trip.

Day 1: Because of bad weather during the prior weekend Freetime had had to be left in Hythe Marina so we had to go over on the ferry to pick her up. Hythe ferry is for pedestrians only and it docks at the end of a long jetty. The jetty has a little train but guess what? It had run into the buffers the day before and was out of action. Boy, that jetty's long when you're totting a heavy sea bag.

Anyway, after refuelling and topping up the water tank we left Hythe marina at 14:30ish and sailed West, down the coast to Yarmouth. Winds were SW 5 gusting 6 and during the trip the reefing line, which runs down the leach of the mainsail, managed to work its way out down the whole length of the sail. We arrived about 16:00 after recording 25 knots of wind over the boat at times, and spent the night in the boat yard on the other side of the marina.

Re-threading the reefing line was challenging but a six foot length of stiff wire and infinite patience seemed to work. A couple of beers at the Yarmouth YC were followed by a steak at The Kings Head. Over coffee Paul outlined the sailing plan which, depending on weather would take in Weymouth, Dartmouth, Salcombe and Plymouth, then back to Southampton by train.

Day 2: We had a leisurely breakfast at The Mariners Café and listened to the weather forecast which was far from good (overcast, wet, wind 5-7 SE veering SW) so we went back to the mooring office to see if we could stay another night. About this time we heard two lifeboat maroons being fired. Once a year the town hosts an event called "The Old Gaffers" and the coming weekend was it.

One more night then we would have to leave before the harbour was crammed with just about every gaff rigged boat still afloat on the South coast. During the day we listened to the RNLI rescue on the VHF radio out around The Needles. A Westerly Consort had lost her sails over the side and become overwhelmed. We later watched her being towed in by the Yarmouth lifeboat. The crew looked very tired and happy to be back on terra firma. We kind of congratulated ourselves on the decision not to leave that day. We then deflated the dinghy, which was scooping up far too much water when lashed across Freetime's transom and stowed it in one of the aft lockers.

Day 3: Departed Yarmouth at 11:30 heading for Weymouth passing the first incoming 'Gaffer' as we left it was raining and the wind was out of the South at 15 to 20 knots. We had to reef and de-reef several times during the day and always had Poole Harbour in mind as a divert port if needed. Thank goodness for my new foul weather gear this kept me both dry and warm.

Gaffer



We arrived at Weymouth at 17:00 and moored up right outside the harbour office and the Royal Dorset YC alongside a Starlight 35. Weymouth SC, a past Signet Nationals venue, was just across the harbour. That evening after visiting a pub which had no beer, we dined at a little bistro opposite the old brewery which is now houses small craft, jewellery and collectable shops. Maybe they should have kept the brewery going.

We then went back to the Royal Dorset for a night cap. This is an old fashioned yacht club with old fashioned values. Because Paul belongs to the Royal Air Force YC at Hamble you can sign in to most clubs as a visitor. Within two minutes we had been greeted by their Commodore and Rear Commodore, who attired in club blazers and ties had just emerged from a committee meeting. We were made to feel very welcome and over a scotch mourned the passing of The Cutty Sark which they were quick to explain was once a registered Royal Dorset YC boat.

In the bar they also have a pennant from the royal racing yacht Britannia which was scuttled after the death of George III. A member had been in the crew and was allowed to take something from the boat. When we got back to Freetime we found the owner of the Starlight 35 wanted to swap places as he was intending to leave at 06:00 the next morning. We had to stand off and let him out which considering how much we had had to drink probably wasn't the smartest thing to do, but we got away with it. He even complimented us on our handling!

Day 4: Although the weather was good the prevailing winds were still marginal for rounding 'The Bill' and crossing Lyme Bay so we decided to stay put. Paul discovered a small water leak in the engine compartment and our wind direction indicator was also playing up; always something to do on a boat.

Later we took an open top bus ride out to Portland Bill, walked around the lighthouse and looked at the sea state we would be sailing through the next day. Arriving back in Weymouth we discovered Gypsy Moth IV on the berth behind us. She was returning from her round the world voyage with her final leg crew. She's a lot bigger than she appears in her pictures and has been extensively refitted.

Gypsy Moth IV



Paul had worked out the tide and distance figures to get us around 'The Bill' at the best possible time but they didn't seem to balance. He then discovered the trouble was the difference between GMT and BST. What a difference an hour makes and everything fell into place.

Dinner at Perry's on the quay was followed by another visit to the RDYC where we chatted with Gypsy Moth's skipper in the bar. He told us she was a bitch to turn which we witnessed when she left the following day. She had to do a multi-point turn, using the full width of the harbour to get facing the right way and depart.

Day 5: Up at 08:00 and into town for breakfast and some shopping. Returned and moved over to the fuel barge. Departed about 11:00ish on a timed run out to Portland Bill. It was important we got there at 12:20 just at the point when the tide would turn and assist us pass the point and around into Lyme Regis Bay. The day before the sea had been quite rough but as we approached the south coasts Cape Horn it was as calm as a mill pond.

Portland Bill



We even had time to wave back to people as we rounded. It's a 45 mile slog across the bay to Dartmouth and there is a point when 'The Bill' vanishes astern and Start Point hasn't yet appeared on the bow and the coast off to Starboard is just a smudge on the horizon. It doesn't look much on the charts but it's a big bay. The wind was 2 to 3 south veering south-west so the diesel got a good workout that day.

We arrived at The Mew Stone at the entrance to Dartmouth Harbour at 19:30 and dumping the main headed straight for the Darthaven moorings on the starboard side just above the car ferry. Dinner that night was in a little bistro above the moorings looking across the river towards the town itself. Best pepper steak and bottle of Merlot I've ever tasted but there again we were very hungry.

Day 6: Decided to stay a day. Wandered around the town and did some shopping and ended up in the Royal Dartmouth YC for a liquid lunch. We then moved Freetime a couple of miles up river to Dittisham for the night. This was a picture postcard mooring that Paul wanted to show me and he was right, it was delightful. We inflated the dinghy and went ashore.

Dittisham



At the top of the hill above the village we dropped into one of Dittisham's two pubs and took in the view. As we walked back to the harbour it started to rain so we dived into The Ship to wait it out. Three pints later it obviously wasn't going to stop so we returned to the boat and cooked up the curry we had bought that morning. God, sailing's hell! But someone's got to do it.

Day 7: Secured the dinghy and cast of the mooring buoy at 09:00 for the 20 mile trip to Salcombe. The Harbour Master at Darthaven had been quite helpful with information about getting into Salcombe over the bar and accordingly we planned to approach it with care. Bacon and egg sarnies with loads of coffee was eaten on the run as we crossed Start Bay. The wind was still 2 to 3 south veering south-west.

We passed Prawl Point at 12:15 and rounded Start Point shortly after. We crossed the harbour entrance and then turned to Starboard to line up on the entry transit. This is a line drawn between the left hand red gable of a house on the facing hill and a red pole standing further down the hill, presumably in their garden. Keep that transit dead ahead you run in over the bar. This is a sand bar but Freetime draws 1.8m and running aground is so very embarrassing. We finally picked up a mooring buoy at 13:15 fighting a tide that was flooding out.

The Harbour Master who came alongside a little later was much more dismissive of the bar. He felt it could be crossed in all but the most shallow tide states, and if you had local knowledge, probably even then. We were not about to test his theory. We went ashore in bright sun shine and wandered the town spending sometime in a huge Aladdin's cave of a chandlery, my kind of place. We had dinner at The Fortesque Hotel and retired to the boat for a nightcap.

Day 8: Had breakfast on the boat, deflated the dinghy and cast off about 11:00 ish for Plymouth. During the night the wind had come around to the North and was gusting 4 to 5. Once we cleared Bolt Head we had a straight run across Bigbury Bay to Plymouth Sound. What a sail! Freetime leant into the swell and we clipped along at 7 to 7 1/2 knots. Clear blue sky, bright sunshine, just perfect sailing weather. We even talked about keeping going straight out to the Isle of Scilly.

All to soon Plymouth Sound opened up ahead of us and we turned and beat up into the Eastern Channel past Renney Point to Starboard and the Plymouth Breakwater to Port. Next obstacle was the Duke Rock and then on up into the Cobbler Channel which leads to The Queen Anne's Battery and the marina where Freetime will spend the summer.

Queen Anne's Battery



We radioed ahead and were allocated a holding berth and finally arrived at 14:30. Once safely moored up we set about cleaning the boat; Paul inside, me outside with the hose. Later and after a shower we walked into the Barbican area, just behind the Citadel to find some dinner. We found what looked like a quite nice place overlooking Sutton Harbour but unfortunately it turned out to be the worst meal of the trip, you can't win them all. However just around the corner we did find The Queen's Head; a real old pub that still sells a pint of Mild of all things. The evening immediately perked up and we spent the rest of the evening chatting to 'the locals'.

Day 9: Up at 08:00 and ordered a taxi at the marina office for 11:00 to take us to Plymouth railway station. Had a full English breakfast at the marina café and then packed. Paul had a lot less than me, but then he can leave a lot on the boat. Finally we closed the sea-cocks, turned off the batteries, checked the lines and left Freetime to the care of the marina staff. From Plymouth station we travelled up to Exeter then to Salisbury and finally down to Southampton where we were met by one of Paul's sons who drove us back to Hamble.

And finally it was a good trip with some exciting sailing. Paul's already talking about taking Freetime out to the Scilly Islands sometime during July; now all I've got to do is convince Lyn it would be a great idea to let me go. What did I learn. Self tacking jibs take a lot of work out of crewing; stay out of the way of mainsheets, they may be rope but they hit like a steel bar; how to steer an accurate bearing; always duck when passing through a hatchway and working in the galley when it's gusting force 7 and the boats heeled at 40° requires a highly developed sense of balance and lightning reflexes.

**Mike (Aren't dinghies small)
Baker**

Social Calendar Dates For Your Diary

Sun 5 Aug	Sail/cruise in aid of RLNI
Mon 27 Aug	BEWL WATER SAILING CLUB REGATTA IN KENT Bank Holiday Pursuit racing
Sun 2 Sep	SCOA open Meeting at Aquarius Sailing Club
Sat 13 Oct	Murder Mystery with Bob Sumner will probably be replaced with an alternative event
Sat 27 Oct	Fire Works at Kempton Park then soup & victuals at Club. NOTE change in date
Sat 17 Nov	AQSC Annual Dinner
Sat 1 Dec	AGM, Prize Giving and End of Season Party
2008	
Sun 13 Jan	Lunch and sailing rules quiz
Sat 10 Feb	Ladies Night
Sun 17 Feb	Lunch and frostbite cruise/scavenger hunt
Sat 15 Mar	Start of Season Party
Sun 23 Mar	Easter Egg Trophy, 4 races, best 3 count, Monday is Bank Holiday

Aquarius Sailing Club Regatta

Saturday 23 June

Why is it that you only have to mention the AQSC regatta and the weather forecast immediately goes into free fall? It's hard enough to get people on the water normally let alone trying to do it in monsoon conditions.

At first it was dry with a reasonable west wind but that soon dropped and it was very difficult to make way against the 1 knot current.

The days racing, organised by Eric Bridgewater (OOD) assisted by Mark Cordwell and Graham Thompson, was as follows:-

11:30 - Regatta Race (7 boats competed)

14:00 - Regatta Trophy Race 1 (8 boats competed)

15.45 - Race for Ladies & Novices Trophies. Won by Lady Joan Courtney ably crewed by Richard Cannon and Novice Simon Lunis (9 boats competed)

The start of the last race was delayed due to the torrential rain but this returned as soon as it started. The boats finished with several inches of water in them just from the rain. Joan Courtney commented that it was fun; probably helped by the good waterproofs she had borrowed.

Full results and placings are detailed on the AQSC web site.

Sunday 24 June

The weather was virtually a repeat of Saturday but perhaps a little lighter on the rain and the South wind wind being reported as 'circular' although a bit stronger. The days racing was organised by George Bray (OOD) ably assisted by Joan Bray and Mike Rogers.

11:30 - Regatta Trophy Race 2 (8 boats competed)

13:30 - Commodore's Novelty Event. This involved all the boats picking up as many wooden orphaned ducklings released by the patrol boat as possible. It was absolute mayhem but a lot of fun and certainly taught the youngsters something about close quarter boat handling.

The Regatta Trophy Race 3 (5 boats competed)

16:00 - The usual fun & games got underway which usually involves everybody getting very wet and this year was no exception. Two teams paddled stripped down Pico and Escape Solsa hulls around a course starting with one crew and increasing the number on board each lap. I'm not sure who won but at one time or another both boats sunk).

After coming ashore the Commodore launched the famous AQSC Gondola, which was built for the 2005 Ladies Night. It just survived with one of Simon Lunniss boys, Dominic, in it but when Nigel got in it capsized and sunk like a brick. It was duly rescued and I understand it's sailing days over and it is to be auctioned off to the membership with proceeds going to charity.

17:15 - The traditional regatta tea was served and much thanks go to team of ladies who worked all afternoon preparing this, it was delicious. The strawberries and cream rounded it off nicely although I know that your Commodore is rather partial to his cucumber sandwiches.

After tea Nigel thanked everybody involved in the organisation and catering and then requested Richard to announce the regatta results. Full results and placings are detailed on the AQSC web site but Simon Lunniss did extremely well to win the overall Regatta Trophy. Nice one Simon!

And finally, if anyone has any influence with the powers that be could they please intercede on our behalf and arrange for some decent regatta weather next year.

Mike (Over Easy) Baker



Dominic Lunniss in the Gondola