

Walton Pond - The Final Cruise

17 boats departed from the Orwell at around 10:30 on Saturday morning 25 September:

Folie Douce (leading the Cruise), Columbine, Fire Fly, Symphonie, Dream Machine, Spree Three, Nixi, Blue Fin, Deseo, Rafiki, Madicken, Athena, Calidris, Portia, Brazen Hussy, High Flight, Red Shank.



This cruise must have been one of (if not the) best attended cruise in the history of Cruise in Company. Certainly in our around 25 years enjoying this institution we cannot recall one with more participants.

First we must thank Simon and Georgette Harrison for organising the event. All credit must be given for the patience and forbearance shown in arranging berths and numbers for the evening meals despite many changes in numbers wishing to attend. Walton Pond had a limit how many boats they could take and eventually 11 berthed in the Pond and 5 deeper draft yachts+ 1 late starter at Titchmarsh Marina.

Friday evening dinner provided a one-off menu arranged by Marian. The staff gave friendly efficient service, and all 40+ diners enjoyed it even if conversational noise levels sometimes made hearing a little difficult. However noise decreased markedly when eating superseded talking. Acquaintances were renewed and many reminiscences made.

Simon outlined Saturday's programme with details of the gate's opening and closing times and of depth



over the sill. Dire consequences were predicted for those who deviated from the straight and narrow, or rather the tortuous and narrow, or delayed entry too long.

He proposed a sail (race?) to Outer Ridge buoy to extend the sail.

Saturday dawned with a heavy mist, it was not possible to see

boats on A pontoon from B pontoon. Just as the fleet mustered for departure, we had to clear the channel to make room for the passing cruise liner Island



Sky. This Noble Caledonian operated vessel, with room for 120 passengers, was heading for the "port nearest to Sutton Hoo". In practical terms it went to Ipswich's West Bank sand, gravel & ballast quay where a fleet of coaches awaited them to take them to Sutton Hoo and to return the passengers for a departure around 4 pm.

Fortunately, the mist soon thinned and visibility was moderate by the time the Outer Ridge participants left. Light winds meant this being cut short to enable Walton to be reached in time and only Spree Three and Athena managed to round Outer Ridge. A 17 strong spinnaker carrying racing fleet from Levington also headed for both Outer Ridge and Pye End arriving at about the same time as the RHYC CIC fleet, thus leading to some interesting "right of way" manoeuvres.

Dennis and Anne Kell on Redshank had a delayed start due to a fouled prop. Anne donned a wetsuit and worked speedily to remove growth and barnacles but they were too late for the Pond so they diverted to Titchmarsh. All other boats had an uneventful if slow sail to their respective berths. We hope the crabs in the channel to the Pond were members of the "hard hat brigade" as we understand a couple of boats touched the bottom but the rising tide helped them to float off quickly.



Saturday evening at 18.00 two host boats Spree Three (Marcus and Caroline) and Blue Fin (Nigel & Heidi) welcomed 52 members to a nibbles and drinks gathering and our thanks go to them. Fortunately, spills were few despite the conviviality. Caroline was deft in moppi

ng a small red wine spill when hand gestures exceeded line of sight.

At 19.30 all were seated in the Walton and Frinton Yacht Club dining room. Despite Georgette providing each boat with a ticket showing menu choices, voice calls soon superseded these, and Bram, our President acted as voice master and with a minimum of chaos everyone received the meal of their choice. The W&FYC team produced a fitting meal for this End of Season cruise for and despite a lack of serving space they managed to serve our large group with a hot! meal. Thank You.

At the end of the meal a card signed by all present was given to Georgette and Simon expressing our thanks for the effort they had put in to making it such an enjoyable and successful cruise.

The party started to break up at about 21.30 and the Titchmarsh crews took a pre-booked taxi (thanks Bram) to the marina. Winds on Sunday were a little fresher and both the Titchmarsh boats and the Pond group had an enjoyable sail back but the later departure of the those moored in the Pond precluded meeting on their return.

We close the season by saying a very sincere thank You to Simon and Georgette for their excellent organisation and providing a cruise enjoyed by so many.

Finally, it is a pleasure to thank Marcus for putting together a mixed and varied 2021 programme, which was much enjoyed after what was effectively a year without proper sailing. Hopefully this is a precursor to a successful season next year.



CIC Roughs Tower - 11 September 2021

The annual rounding of Roughs Tower in company saw five boats departing from RHYC at around 10:30 on Saturday morning:-

- Madicken (“leading” the CIC, although not necessarily from the front)
- Calidris
- Lazy Days
- Desea
- Brazen Hussy

The tides proved a bit inconvenient for the trip, with HW around 15:30 meaning the fleet had to punch the flood tide on the way out of the river and the ebb tide on the return trip, but the weather at least turned out better than forecast with the sun making an appearance (at least offshore) and a decent F4 to speed us on our way although with a bit more south in the wind than forecast.

I took the unusual step of leading the CIC from someone else’s boat, as Simon had kindly volunteered Madicken as flagship on the basis that we might have more chance of finishing on the same day as the rest of the fleet.

VHF chatter was limited as we realised soon after the off that the traditional CH72 was in use by the Haven Series race control, but the occasional status update via WhatsApp helped to keep everyone in touch.

We we were also treated to a close up view of the Ever Ace, the largest container ship in the world docked at Felixstowe as we sailed past the docks. Unfortunately shortly after this Brazen Hussy had to return to home base with engine troubles so the fleet was reduced to four. I'm sure the assembled boats in Harwich Harbour were intrigued by their final VHF sign-off... "Brazen Hussy will meet you for drinks later"!

Madicken managed to fly the spinnaker until we passed the Cork Sand yacht beacon in order to keep up with the larger boats in the fleet, but unfortunately we were too hard on the wind after that and had to watch Lazy Days disappear into the distance with their snazzy furling code zero reaching sail! I still have hopes of finding my lost iPhone which disappeared into the depths somewhere in this vicinity on the CIC to the Netherlands a few years ago, but I suspect that may be asking for a little too much.

Conditions were slightly boisterous after Cork Sand and we wished that we had made the sandwiches before leaving, and a couple of sizeable dollops of wave top over the coamings kept Madicken's crew on the alert and provided amusement for those who didn't get them down the back of their necks. With a decent breeze the fleet rounded Roughs Tower without any issues and split for the trip home. Calidris and Desea headed back to the North of Cork Sand with Madicken and Lazy Days heading south. Madicken's attempts to find a new short cut over the Cork Sand were unsuccessful so a few more tacks than anticipated were needed before we were able to bear away back towards Harwich.

As we had agreed at the morning briefing that this was to be a cruise, and not a race, I have refrained from reporting the finishing times of the various boats, but at least all involved made it back to RHYC in time for dinner and drinks and to commiserate with Shane and Paula on Brazen Hussy over their ongoing engine issues.

All in all a good day out and great to meet some new (to me at least) cruisers in company.

Titchmarsh NOT Lowestoft

By the middle of the last week in August, it became apparent that the northerly winds were not going to shift in time for our trip up to Lowestoft at the weekend, so eight of us gathered via Zoom on Thursday night to see what we could salvage from it, few having the appetite to punch the wind and the tide through most of Saturday afternoon, even though the spinnaker run back down would have been glorious. Apologies were made to the Royal Norfolk and Yacht Club, who very graciously invited us to return next year, and it is our sincere hope that we will.



After some deliberation (Principally trying to avoid re-visiting some of the locations which the extended cruise visited a few weeks ago), we settled on a run up the river Stour to mislead and over to Titchmarsh for the night on Saturday, with the fleet returning to the club on Sunday afternoon.

Saturday morning saw Islay and Bluefin leave Woolverstone Marina and Reflection depart the Royal Harwich Marina to join Madicken in on her mooring at Clamp House, before keeping eyes peeled for High Flight, who was leaving Levington. All of the fleet got as far as Wrabness, with Madicken, High Flight, Islay and Reflection getting as far as Mistley, although you are invited to guess as to who actually did a U-turn under sail right in front of Mistley Quay. Madicken joined Reflection for a rafted-up lunch on a mooring at Wrabness, whilst Bluefin joined

Islay on another mooring. It was then 'catch me if you can' for the three boats to join High Flight (Reflection headed back to Ipswich for a rally), which was already well on the way to Titchmarsh, hoping to take advantage of the rising tide and avoid her 2 m draft becoming an issue with depth.

Keeping boats together on this cruise in company then appeared to be the easy part, compared to keeping the group of people together on the walk to Walton and Frinton Yacht Club following drinks kindly hosted on Bluefin by Nigel and Heidi Seary. After some enthusiastic pre-loading by the adults, Penny Thompson, Harriet Wells, Nigel Thompson, and Simon and Danny Blackburn headed across the fields following what Simon assured them was an accurate ordnance survey map that would deliver the fastest route to the club. As the crow flies, this may have been right, but having piled through several hedges and vaulted a fence onto a housing estate (or more accurately the gentleman helping the ladies down over the fence by grabbing a foot each), the breakaway group had to pre-order their suppers via WhatsApp to join some 25 minutes late those who had taken the more sensible tarmac-derived route.

The Walton and Frinton Yacht Club delivered admirably and served up a great dinner with good wine, enjoyed in fantastic company.

After a morning in Frinton (where Heidi and Nigel showed off their fabulously small boat-bikes) the team assembled for lunchtime drinks at the Harbour Lights to plan the passage back. Only Madicken made a small amount of use of her jib on leaving the marina up to the first elbow in the Twizzle, before having to concede defeat and motor out of the river and past Island point before beating back over Dovercourt Bay in company with Islay. The northerly winds made for challenging sailing but all the more rewarding to get home in a reasonable time. Thanks to everybody concerned being such good sports, both in coming on the weekend and not letting the weather spoil it and also to those who were trusting/bold enough to follow Simon over all the fences and through those hedges.

East Coast cruise 2021

Click to watch a slide show of the cruise (Many thanks to Heidi Seary):

Part 1

[Adobe Spark Video](#)

Part 2

[Adobe Spark Video](#)

Part 3

<https://spark.adobe.com/video/OXOrCgmFy8fFR>

Early ideas of a foreign venture were swiftly discarded and the East Coast cruise was on. Spree Three (Marcus & Caroline Bucknall) Keld (Mark & Lily Benbow) Bluefin (Nigel & Heidi Seary with friends Phil and Karen) and Islay (Nigel & Penny Thomson and brother Roger) set off for Ramsgate on the 24th July. The trip down and across the Thames estuary was none too comfortable with confused sea states and an adverse South easterly breeze. However a good supper at the Harbour Brasserie revived the spirits. Next day the assembled crew marched up the coast to Broadstairs for lunch. Monday saw us taking the train to Dover and a very interesting look round the castle, although the war command centre was still closed. Off to Chatham next with the wind in a much more favourable direction giving a great sail along the Kent coastline and into the Medway. The Historic Dockyards are always a must do and a most interesting day out before gathering on the boats for yet another delicious home cooked supper.

Combining together for supper, led by chief cooks Lily Benbow and Heidi Seary, is a mark of the CIC cruising routine with meals out only on a more limited basis and everyone contributing to the cooking effort. From Chatham, yet another good sail up to the Whitaker spit but then with the wind on the nose, a bumpy ride into Burnham. Supper that evening at the Oyster Smack. With careful planning, storm Evert passed through as we took a day off, before motoring down to North Fambridge for a night on the Yacht pontoon.

Next up was a move to the Blackwater, with nights in West Mersea and Bradwell as well as a trip down to Osea island. What turned out to be the last destination was to Heybridge basin, where the sun finally came out for two days to allow a most idyllic stay, and finally out came the barbecues.

The combined crews artistic efforts were put to the test by Heidi Seary with everyone creating a picture - not surprisingly boats predominated as the popular theme and hidden talents revealed.

In light of the impending high winds forecasted, the decision was taken to head for home two days early, a good move and a super fast sail in the sunshine all the way back to Woolverstone. All in all, a great cruise (225NM) logged and mostly "sailed" miles) and hopefully next year we will be able to head off to the continent again, France being the likely destination.

Woodbridge 26th & 27th June

Yachting Monthly Summer 2021 issue, Sir Robin Knox -Johnston's no 1 tip for a cracking sail: Cruising in Company.



Another weekend and this time off to Woodbridge with a fleet of 9 boats (Swan Song, Keld, Athena, Bluefin, Calidris, Madicken, Colombine, Paddington V, Spree Three). With impeccable passage planning everyone safely traversed the bar in good time despite the light winds, with a nice sail up the Deben in glorious sunshine. The tidemill was busy but thanks to Leigh Baxter's forward planning all safely accommodated. Plenty of time to stroll round the town, catch up with friends before congregating on the grass for pre-dinner drinks. Jan and Leigh (Baxter) had managed to secure tables for us at the Boathouse despite all the restrictions. A new restaurant that is still finding its feet catering for larger groups, but the food is excellent and well worth a visit. Bram van der Have kindly organised for 2 groups to visit the Tidemill for a guided and very interesting tour on the Sunday morning, while we waited for the tide to rise to allow departure over the sill. A brisk North

Easterly meant a fairly swift passage down the river with the added entertainment of navigating through racing fleets of dinghies at Waldringfield. Conditions were fine over the bar, but the downwind leg to Landguard was more of a challenge. Madicken, once again, takes the prize for purist sailing, having only had the engine on for a couple of minutes to get out of the Tidemill, before sailing home and onto the hammerhead at the Club without using the engine, ably assisted by first mate Danny.

Another great weekend - Sir Robin Knox Johnston's no 1 cruising tip is spot on.

Orford 12th & 13th June

This report is based on the steady stream of WhatsApp messages exchanged over the weekend, carefully monitored from the garden in Cambridge! Ably organised by Simon Blackburn, Portia, Mollymawk, Vanadis and High Flight joined Madicken for an early start from various berthings, coming together as a fleet heading out of the river and setting track north. Having arrived off Orford Haven, it seems Madicken headed further north before returning to cross the bar with Mollymawk around 12.00. Meanwhile High Flight and



Portia had already crossed the bar and reported that plenty of moorings were available. Vanadis were meanwhile getting to grips with Whatsapp! Once safely moored - everyone decanted ashore for supper. Messages suggest that a bit of mechanics were needed at some stage to deal with pesky outboards. Later comms that evening indicated that the Kings Head were less than welcoming and none too efficient on their taking of orders, but all were fed and watered. Departure in the morning saw Madicken providing on site pilotage advice forwarding photos and screen shots of tracks to help the bigger boats coming behind. Rumour has that Portia may have had a momentary touching of ground but otherwise seems all got out safely, and then a decent sail back (comms don't reveal too much on wind conditions) but sufficient that some were able to meet for a drink back at base around 17.00

St. Katherine's Dock Saturday 29th May to Wednesday 2nd June

The end of May was approaching, the weather was lousy. What to do – well, lets go sailing anyway. So we signed up for the Cruise-in-Company to St Katherine's Dock in London, over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend, and by some miracle a high-pressure area set in, the weather changed, the sun came out and everybody was very happy.



We mustered at the Club on the Friday evening for a briefing by Marcus, which basically consisted of “go out of the river, turn right till you reach Queenborough”. So that’s what we all did, with an impressive fleet of 11 boats – Spree Three, Redshank, Madicken, Firefly, Folie Douce, Kalabash, Portia, Serendib, Columbine, Dream Machine and Anusha. Sadly, Bluefin had to drop out at the last minute.

The variety in the fleet was impressive, with boats from 27 foot to 39 foot, from new and shiny to mature and well-worn. Same can be said for the crew, whose ages spanned three quarters of a century. And at times it felt like there were more kids than adults, which was great fun – and there was even a dog!

Saturday brought us blue skies and a gentle breeze. The fleet split, with the Commodore coming up with a cunning plan to go the offshore route round the top of Gunfleet Sands and down Barrow Deep – surely more favourable tide and perhaps more breeze than the inshore route down The Wallet and across the Spitway. Why hadn’t anybody else thought of this? Kalabash, Firefly and Spree Three followed, a decision they would come to regret. It was a bad idea – it was a longer route, the light, fluky NE breeze was frustrating and after gybing the cruising chute numerous times it all got a bit tedious. And the rest of the fleet beat us to Queenborough. That was the last bit of tactical advice offered by the Commodore.

After a night rafted up on a mooring, we set off for the big city early the next morning and had a good sail almost as far as the Thames Barrier, motoring the rest of the way to St. Katherine’s. What an amazing experience – as a Londoner, I can be a bit complacent about sights and sounds of London, but approaching by river for the first time was fantastic.

Arriving at the dock, we did what we were told by the very efficient staff, and barely had time for a cold beer before it was time for the Pimms and nibbles party organised by James and Carol Littlewood from Paddington V, who were already at St. Katherine’s for an extended stay – thanks very much to them for looking after us so well.

Our day of rest, Monday, was spent by some cycling to Greenwich (with James as tour guide), others entertained friends and family on board in the hot sunshine, and the kids splashed around the dock in an inflatable - managing, somehow, to not fall in.

We locked out of St. Katherine's early on Tuesday morning, with Spree Three carrying out an interesting experiment to determine whether her length was greater than the width of the lock. It was, just. Helping hands were mobilised, ropes were pulled, order was resumed and the crowd of onlookers dispersed.



The return trip to Queenborough went smoothly – we left Serendib in London as they were heading round the south coast for another few weeks, and Folie Douce and Redshank stayed on for another day. Portia sailed straight back to Woolverstone, but the rest of us met up on the pontoon at Queenborough for more eating, drinking and socialising.

A lost halliard on Dream Machine required somebody to go up the mast – Sebastian's enthusiasm was not matched by any of the adults, so he got the job and the halliard was eventually sorted out.

On Wednesday, we motor-sailed back to Woolverstone, with a couple of the slower boats valiantly struggling against the flood tide for the last part of the trip.

We arrived back exhausted – nothing to do with the gentle sailing, just the effects of the sun, the socialising, the eating and the fine wines and cool beers. It was great fun. Huge thanks to Marcus and Caroline for organising it all, and to James and Carol for being the shore crew in London.

Bradwell 1st/2nd May 2021

A sneak peek into the life of RHYC Cruise in Company.

As another frantic work week was coming to an end it became apparent that the Bank Holiday weekend was suddenly upon us. As ever, we had failed to make any concrete plans, we hadn't looked at tide times or weather and the thought of leaving the river for a sail was a fleeting fancy. It turned out that we didn't need to worry - the RHYC Cruise in Company group had it all worked out. All we needed to know is that we were leaving the Marina at 8am on Saturday morning. Perfect!!



Boat provisioned, we departed along with seven other yachts into a beautiful sunny morning with fair winds, enjoying a gorgeous sail down the Orwell past Harwich and Dovercourt bay and into the Wallet with Bradwell Marina as our destination. Cruising shoots went up and Simon Blackburn with son Danny showed a clean pair of heels, spinnaker flying and sailing under and past the fleet (in MADICKEN)

As we approached the back waters of Brightlingsea and Mersey, we were unsure about the local waters and decided it best to follow experienced hands Mark and Lily Benbow (in KELD). Great plan. They knew exactly where they were going. Some of the fleet persisted in their love of sailing and beat up into Bradwell. Each to their

own!

As we arrived at our pre-arranged berth, thank you Marcus Bucknall (SPREE THREE we were assisted into place and with no time to lose we were sharing beers and introductions in sunny sheltered cockpits with all sorts of new friends and interesting people. Supper at the local pub had already been booked for us all. How lovely is that! After being very well fed and watered we shared a few drinks around the fire pit in the pub garden before retreating to our cosy berths for a great night's sleep.

Following our obligatory bacon and egg breakfast the following morning we set off as a group for a stroll along the picturesque coastal path to apparently one of the oldest churches in England. It's a good job I wore my trainers, we walked for 12 kilometers!! Chit chatting away about this and that the time flew by quickly helped by a short pit stop where Anne and Dennis (in REDSHANK) shared delicious homemade date and coconut flap jacks with us all! Thank you, Anne, we couldn't have made it back to base without them.

Strong winds forecast for the following day meant that an earlier than planned departure was sensible, so with no time for a siesta, our fellow CIC comrades were ready to help us out of a difficult berth. This time we knew which way to go! Back at RHYC we were invited to a

steak and red wine supper on KELD covered cockpit to recount our journeys and tales of the sea. This culminated in untuned guitar playing and Irish singing. The perfect way to end a perfect day.

The morning brought more cockpit gatherings and coffee's all round and lots of complaints about the aches and pains of having walked for 12 kilometers (mostly from me) and of hangovers (mostly from Will). We want to say a huge thank you to this wonderful group of fascinating people who welcomed us so kindly and joyfully.



We are so looking forward to the next CIC to London at the end of May. One thing is for sure it is going to be an adventure in the greatest of company.

Susie Patten (Kalabash)

Harwich - 18th April 2021



A gentle opener for this year, we sailed down to Harwich (Spree

Three/Bluefin/Madicken/Colmbine/Dream Machine/Half Moon/Portia and Islay) in benign conditions but good to check everything was working, lazy jacks correctly rigged, new sails et al. Lunch in the Alma – properly socially distanced of course who were very welcoming and well organised – a note that they are expanding to add a fish restaurant as well later this year). Islay and Half Moon carried on down the Stour, picnicked and then re-joined the fleet for a gentle run back up the river. Very enjoyable start to the season.