

Hi Shipmates,

Well here we are with Blog 11 which means that, all being well, we are at the end of the penultimate week of this epic 3 month voyage around much of the coast of Great Britain! With David and Jillie safely aboard we bade a fond farewell to the Humber Cruising Club who had looked after us in great style. Indeed, the town of Grimsby has a marvellous heritage museum which brings alive the incredible fishing industry that once prevailed there with segments of a deep sea trawler that literally move as you experience the sheer depravity of gathering and gutting fish in the often horrendous conditions of the Northern reaches of the North Sea. Thanks also to former trawler-man, Sid, who gave us the benefit of his experiences aboard the very trawler in which he served over 30 years ago!

Up early and out through the Fish Dock (complete with rotting remains of what was the largest ice making machine in Europe at the time) and into the ebbing Humber which literally shot us down estuary with Jillie enjoying being back at the helm for her second stint on the good ship 'Theo's Future.' Round the fort (unusually constructed of curved metal sheets) and out to sea past a giant tanker that was discharging over her bow into an enormous hose connected underwater to the shore via a large buoy. Luckily, being of humble draft, we were able to cut the corner and soon found ourselves proceeding South under full sail and sunshine!

But soon the current turned against and the wind headed so we were back to the old routine..... 'on de nose!' We gradually clawed our way south passed a gigantic wind farm and across the Wash – and what a troubled patch of water that is with conflicting currents coming from all directions garnished up with broken seas. Not much fun at all, but we eventually made over to the North Norfolk coast and, as dusk fell, we closed with our destination, Wells-next-the Sea.

And what a tricky entrance awaited us between breaking waves on either side as we edged our way gingerly from buoy to buoy, not all lit! Having narrowly avoided spearing the bank with the bowsprit on the last bend we were just wondering where to moor when Dave spotted three flashes from a torch..... a traditional smugglers signal that we reciprocated.... could it be for us? We had no barrels of brandy to roll up the beach but we continued cautiously to be greeted by Roy and Sheila Sherlock who were thrilled to see us.... what a relief that it wasn't a trap by the 'boys in blue!' It had been a truly knacker day and easily the longest day's run at 59 nautical miles, not bad for a 19 footer..... thankfully, Roy and Sheila took us under their wing and we were soon in the pub munching delicious grub! Moreover, a hamper of goodies was loaded onboard.... thanks.

Next day we rested up and strolled around this delightful village (we also observed the full extent of the mud bank we just missed the night before!). Jillie's better half turned up at tea time and whisked her away but not before we had a gynomous all day breakfast and copious mugs of coffee onboard a resident Dutch sailing barge.

Off early next morning complete with Roy for the next 50 nm to Lowestoft. All good news until the tide turned which forced us in to the beach. Dave's tactic worked a treat and he exchanged pleasantries alternately with dog-walkers and fishermen as we clawed our way southwards past Cromer and Great Yarmouth where we overtook a Sadler 26 that had been at least 5 or 6 miles ahead but in the tide..... we were nearly ambushed at the Lowestoft harbour entrance by a huge fisheries vessel exiting at a great rate of knots but Dave's lightning reactions saved the day.... cheers 'Royal!' We were warmly greeted by Chal (my shoreside minder!) who was to

join for the next leg. Also, Sheila re-appeared plus daughter Emily to collect Roy and we were soon tucking into fish and chips courtesy of the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk YC ,complete with polished royal cipher on the massive copper cistern in the gents loo!

Next port of call was the River Ore that I hadn't visited for 50 years! As a 10 year old I had crewed the ferryboat which took the scientists to/from the secret establishment on Orford Ness (long since discontinued). It was fun to take our brave little ship over the bar and up river amongst the abundant waders and wildlife. Chal suggested a pub lunch and we were soon tucking into local crab and salmon fish cakes all washed down with Adnams best bitter which at 4.7% had us all taking a well earned afternoon nap onboard.... followed by Brookie's boiled eggs and soldiers for high tea and a good kip. Brief visit to castle, church and shop (run by Christine the current vicar's wife) revealed several folk who knew my Uncle Ken who was vicar of Orford between 1956 -1973.... a pretty good stint! Indeed, one old fisherman on the quay informed me that he had his confirmation classes with Uncle Ken who was clearly a popular and well respected member of the community. He was also a good shot.... Finally, thanks to Philip the quay master for his helpful advice.

And so down river to the next creek, some 5 miles along the coast. With Chal, our local pilot pointing the way, we were soon easing up the River Deben towards Woodbridge some 8 miles away. Amazingly, Simon, Commodore of the Deben CY, came down river in yacht to greet us and we were soon safely alongside the club jetty. It was farewell to Chal (great to have had you onboard) and fund raising started immediately with 2 couples for drinks in the cockpit!! Simon generously left us the clubhouse keys that enabled us to cook and enjoyed a 'fat boys' breakfast!

The final leg to Harwich was uneventful and Dave glided us into the welcoming jaws of the Shotley Marina. No sooner had we arrived than Terri plus John (another former RM bandsman) and his wife Maureen descended upon us for tea in the cockpit. There followed a magnificent supper party in Ipswich..... lots of RM banter and 'trips down memory lane' .... thanks so much John and Maureen..... Terri placed Dave firmly in house arrest which left me all alone onboard but feeling very mellow! Cheers you guys.....

So, farewell and adieu once more dear friends and shipmates..... one week to go and the winds look set to stay fair for a while..... fingers, toes and everything else crossed!

Fair Winds

Mike