

SCUTTLEBUTT

SUSSEX POLICE OFFSHORE SAILING CLUB



NEWSLETTER

S.P.O.S.C. A.G.M.

*At the John Harvey Tavern,
Lewes commencing at 1900hrs
Tuesday 28th March, 2017*

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May Cruise 2016

*Story told by Frank Hooper
with Photographs by Paul
Pearce and Chris Gillings*

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Three Men in a Boat

*Lenny Wheeler's tale of his
adventures during the May
Cruise*

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Round the Island Race

*July 2016 mayhem reported
by Frank Hooper*

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HAPPY NEW YEAR S.P.O.S.C.

Time again to wish all members a Happy New Year and give a timely reminder of the AGM and the 2017 Programme.

With 2016 now just a memory (where did it go?) it's time to be looking forward to some decent weather and a chance to get out on the water. Your committee have been busy planning for the year ahead and there are some dates to put in your diaries. First and so important in the sailing calendar is the Club's Annual General Meeting. To be held in the delightful John Harvey Tavern, Bear Yard, Cliffe High Street, Lewes BN7 2AN commencing at 19.00 hours on Tuesday 28th March, 2017. This is an important event for the club and members are urged to attend and give their support. If nothing else it is a pleasant social event at a lovely welcoming venue, with a chance to meet like minded colleagues.

The 2017 Frostbite Sail will take place during the week of the 20th to 24th March, please note the amended dates, with crew for the whole or first half boarding late afternoon on Sunday 19th March. Contact Commodore Owen Poppett if you are interested.

The 14th UK Firefighters Sailing Challenge is being held in the Solent from Monday 8th May to Thursday 11th May. The crew for this should already be sorted but if you are interested in knowing more or perhaps being involved in a future event contact skipper Alwyn Evans at;

alwynevansuk@yahoo.com

Watch the Club website for further dates and more sailing opportunities. Finally I wish you all a successful and happy 2017.

Terry Clothier

Scuttlebutt Editor



Editorial Note

Please remember that this is your magazine and should reflect your views and experiences for the benefit of other members. If you have any comment, articles or photographs you feel are appropriate for inclusion then please forward them to me, terryclothier@hotmail.com for publication.

The opinions expressed in articles within Scuttlebutt are those of the individual only and not necessarily those of the Sussex Police Offshore Sailing Club. No responsibility can be accepted for any inaccuracies or omissions.



SCUTTLEBUTT



A Message from the Commodore Owen Poplett

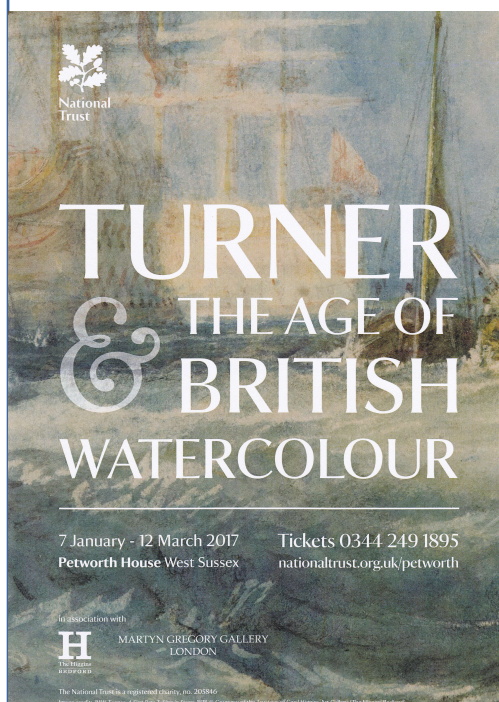
Dear Reader,

Welcome to the first Scuttlebutt of 2017. Many thanks to Terry Clothier for putting together another excellent edition and to those who have contributed.

I hope many of you have managed to get on the water over the winter period and those who haven't are looking forward to trips now the weather is starting to show signs of getting warmer.

The first event in this year's SPOSC calendar is Frostbite which will be from 20th March to 24th March 2017. There are still spaces if you would like to come for the whole week or half of the week, if you do please contact me ASAP by email or mobile.

The second event is the AGM which will be held at the John Harvey Tavern in Lewes on Tuesday 28th March 2017. We still need a volunteer for Secretary, ideally they will have access to the Sussex Police computer system and we also need an assistant secretary.



The Firefighters Challenge Regatta is now booked and will take place in May with Alwyn trying to rustle some of us up into some form of racing crew. Good luck with that Alwyn!

The AGM is an important fixture in the SPOSC calendar, it is your opportunity to select your committee, hear about what is happening with the club and the Sussex Police Sports Association but more importantly your opportunity to tell your committee what you want the club to do. Please make the effort to attend, it is also a great opportunity to catch up with other members.

If you are a SPOSC Skipper and wish to run a trip this year please let me know or let us know at the AGM so that we can plan ahead.

I look forward to seeing many of you on the water and more of you at the AGM.

Owen Poplett

Commodore. Owen.poplett@sussex.pnn.police.uk

07729229750

Notice of AGM & Proposed Agenda follow.

SCUTTLEBUTT

Sussex Police Offshore Sailing Club Notice of the Annual General Meeting

Date Tuesday 28th March 2017

Time 19.30hrs to 21.30hrs

Venue 1st Floor Function Room, John Harvey Tavern, Bear Yard,
Cliffe High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2AN.

Nominations

Nominations for Commodore and Treasurer have been received. We still need nominations / volunteers for the office of Secretary and Assistant Secretary, they really need access to the Sussex Police computer system.

If you wish to nominate a willing volunteer or wish to volunteer for these posts please email owen.poplett@sussex.pnn.police.uk

Not all flag officers are for re-election at the AGM. A number of existing officers are willing to stand and some are standing down.

Area reps will make up the other committee positions.

| Officer | Current | Willing To Stand 2017 |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Commodore | Owen Poplett | Yes / Nominated |
| Vice Commodore | Alwyn Evans | Not for re-election this year |
| Secretary | Penny Furtado | No |
| Assistant Secretary | Colin Jaques Resigned | No |
| Treasurer | Alwyn Evans | Yes / Nominated |
| Assistant Treasurer | Anne Darling | Not for re-election this year |
| HQ Rep | Owen Poplett | Yes |
| West Rep | Vacant | |
| East Rep | Graham Castell | Yes |
| Brighton & Hove Rep | Richard Bates | Yes |

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THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

of the Sussex Police Offshore Sailing Club
19:30 hrs on Tuesday 28th March, 2017
at the John Harvey Tavern, Bear Yard, Lewes

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of 2016 AGM
3. Matters arising from minutes
4. Commodore's Report
5. Secretary's Report
6. Financial Report
7. Election of Committee
 - 7.1. Commodore
 - 7.2. Secretary
 - 7.3. Assistant secretary
 - 7.4. Treasurer
 - 7.5. Area Representatives
8. 2017 Programme
9. Presentation of Trophies
10. Any Other Business



SCUTTLEBUTT



A Lot of Boat - 'Solent Mistress'

May Cruise 2016

by Frank Hooper - photo's by Paul Pearce & Chris Gillings

For some reason best known to themselves, Fairview had decided to change our charter boat from an Oceanis 43 to an almost brand new Oceanis 45. Two foot may not sound a lot but when it comes to parking it is. The down side was that the change meant that we could not take the boat over until sometime around 1900 hours which was a couple of hours later than we had anticipated but did have the effect of clarifying our dithering about where to go.

We had originally thought that the SPOSC May Cruise should try and 'do' the eastern side of the Bay of the Seine instead of the usual dash across to Cherbourg/ Channel Islands/ St Vaast. Weather was expected to be a major factor in the decision, but as it turned out a NNW backing W didn't really make a difference as to the destination. However the departure time change did, as there was no way we could make the St Vaast lock before it closed on Monday 16th May morning opening, and while Cherbourg was an option, because the tides were early and late, any further movement east or west from Cherbourg would have to be at unsocial hours. So the decision was made to go to Fecamp where Lennie Wheeler in his boat Anita would be.

Dave 'Harry' Mallon had summoned Ocado to deliver the necessary victuals to

the boat at Hamble where Skipper Chris Gillings, Eamonn O'Dwyer and first time sailor Paul Pearce gathered to drink coffee awaiting the final cleaning of the boat. I must say that by the time the cleaners had finished, it was a bit like taking a new car out of the showroom for the first time – don't touch anything! 'Solent Mistress' was extremely well equipped with an integrated B & G touch screen navigation system at each wheel position, a hydraulic bathing platform - not to be lowered less than 2 metres from a solid object astern and four cabins plus the usual saloon berth.

Once rations had been stored and the necessary safety briefing conducted, we were ready to depart just before 2000 hours. Fortunately as we were en route to Fecamp the eastern Solent beckoned and we didn't have to bother about making the Hurst narrows before the tide turned. Although the tide was against us, they were at the bottom of neaps leaving not much more than a knot or so against us. A very light wind from the NW with a forecast of it backing to the West and increasing indicated a hoisted main but furled genoa pending the wind strengthening. A 54 HP engine ensured that we were not short of power as we headed down toward the Nab Tower and out into the Channel. The overnight crossing brought no excitement and little shipping other than at day break the increasing wind allowed the engine to be silenced and we were making 6 to 7 knots in a Force 3 on a broad reach. The French coast soon hove into view, and we

passed between the arms of Fecamp harbour around midday when the fun started.



Fecamp - town in background

It seems that the marina at Fecamp does not expect boats above 40 foot to want to moor up, and tailors it's pontoons accordingly. Lennie had already identified a berth adjacent to his in which we could go, but he hadn't reckoned with the boat length. Just to be helpful the by now SW wind was blowing 15 plus knots broadside to the berth, and after placing Solent Mistress into the designated hole it was obvious she could not stay there without preventing any other boats moving down the corridor between the arms. A quick exit took us out into the open water leaving Eamonn on the pontoon. Fortunately whatever he said was unintelligible in the wind. The only available hammerhead for visitors was occupied by the local pilot boat, so it was a berth or nothing. A selection was made on the next arm where there was slightly more water between the arms and the pontoon seemed to be a little longer, but still nowhere near 45 feet.

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May Cruise 2016 continued

by Frank Hooper - photo's by Paul Pearce & Chris Gillings

The shore party of Lennie and Eamonn (who had had to move at speed the full length of the arm and back down to where we were – still muttering something) positioned themselves and in we went. The next quarter of an hour was rather chaotic. Forty five foot of high free board boat ,even with bow thrusters ,does not behave very well with a strong side wind. Finally sufficient rope had been attached to the rather lacklustre cleats available, and with multiple springs holding her bow clear, she settled with about 8 foot overhanging astern.

The next good news was that the French celebrated Whitsun a week before us and consequentially the town was closed as was the Capitainere. Fortunately the important code to the showers was known, and the whole crew took advantage to improve their appearance. Food and drink were next on the menu followed by a general decision that it would not be sensible to have a quick 'kip' as it would ruin the rest of the day, at which point everyone retired to their bunks!

In view of the general holiday, it was felt that an early evening meal was on the cards to avoid the rush by the locals celebrating another day off.

However before the trip ashore, the opportunity was taken to drink a toast to the late John Batley, long time member of the SPOSC who had died the previous week. John had been sailing with Lennie and Geoff Randle two weeks before his death, and had left a bottle of red wine aboard for future use and we couldn't think of a better way to use it.

Then, joined by Lennie and his two crew, Russel and Jack, a suitable establishment was sought along the seafront which turned out to be the first place we came to, and just as well as within a quarter of an hour of our arrival the place was packed – presumably all coming to see their English friends. The food was good, the wine better, and an excellent evening was had culminating with a gathering aboard Solent Mistress where the world was put to rights again.

Tuesday turned out to be the best day of the trip weather wise. Lennie had opted to go east along the coast to St Valery, but as that port was tidal bound we decided to head down coast toward Le Havre. Originally the intention had been to go to

Honfleur, one of the early SPOSC destinations in the 1980's, but the changeable weather forecast dictated that Le Havre with it's all weather entry/exit would be more suitable. We had a cracking sail down past Cap d'Antifer and the industrial port of Antifer with it's oil refinery and tanks, taking care to cross the buoyed channel at the correct place to avoid any unpleasantness from the authorities.

An easy entry was made into Le Havre in late afternoon followed by the usual search for a berth . Finally we were shown to a new pontoon along which we could lay alongside. Le Havre marina is in the process of enlargement but without water or electricity at that time. Still an easy enough mooring albeit a good ten minute walk from the ablutions. We hadn't been there long before a very desirable XP 55 yacht berthed a short distance behind us. To our surprise a group of armed and uniformed French Customs officers suddenly materialised and proceeded to question the crew of the boat. It transpired that it was registered in Latvia but crewed by Russians, hardly a surprise then that it received attention.

The net result was that for the duration of our stay, odd characters kept wandering past us to have a look at the boat before, presumably, reporting back on it's status.

Still more important matters called, and having obtained the locations of a few restaurants from the reception staff, Harry guided us into the town successfully finding the first choice on the list. It was clearly a hit with the locals and we had trouble getting a table but were finally accommodated. Verdict- food on the expensive side and in some cases not up to the standard - struck off the list for the future.

(continued)



Blue Skies off Cap d'Antifer

SCUTTLEBUTT

May Cruise 2016 continued

by Frank Hooper - photo's by Paul Pearce & Chris Gillings

Back to boat to mull over the next day's proceedings over a night cap. Forecast for Wednesday was less than appealing with heavy rain most of the day and SW wind rising to Force 5-6. We had already decided to stay over in Le Havre prior to returning early Thursday morning.

For once the forecast was correct and the day is best glossed over until the evening when the local yacht club was invitingly close and to where we repaired as soon as it was decent. Highly recommended. Had the dining area almost to ourselves overlooking the marina, excellent food and good service all at a very reasonable price. Only downside was watching and hearing the wind whipping in from the NW which didn't bode well for an early start. The forecast was quite good with the wind predicted to drop and back SW so to bed optimistically looking for a 0600 hours departure.

The 0500 hours alarm was barely necessary. The wind in the rigging during the night gave a pretty good indication of what was going on, and a quick check of the wind instruments showed 24 knots in the NW which was no good to man or beast. Back to bed for reassessment later, but at least it was dry. As the morning progressed the cloud started to break with the odd glimpse of sun although the wind remained as strong. An expedition into town was mounted to get something to eat with a intention of departing early evening. The town was busy and as we walked towards the centre there was a tremendous explosion. As the local passer by's ignored it so did we until the second and third such noise at which point we followed the sound to it's source outside the Hotel de Ville where we found a latter day Robespierre haranguing the crowd of some hundreds –

presumably to take another day off. We had stumbled upon the French at work, part of which consisted of throwing what seem to be thunder-flashes around under peoples feet. The spectacle didn't detain us for long, and then it was off to an upmarket burger bar for some sustenance. On emerging the sun was bright and the wind had dropped. A quick return to the marina confirmed the situation and Chris made a quick decision to get to sea while the going was good.

The forecast had remained the same with a NW wind backing to the SW and blowing around Force 3-4 ideal for us with the long waterline and very flat aft sections, a good downwind boat. The departure was uneventful and we were soon motor sailing parallel to the coast before easing out into the Channel. Watches were set and as expected the wind slowly backed toward the west. What was not expected was the rising wind speed, and by 2200 hours we had 20+ knots on a broad reach. 'Solent Mistress' really took off making 10 plus knots over the ground without any problem, but as the wind increased to 24 knots and more it was clear that the time

had come to reef. In quick succession the first and second reefs were put in, bringing the boat more under control without sacrificing any speed. The 30 miles from the edge of the TSS to the Nab Tower was covered in little over two and half hours and by 0230 on Thursday morning we were coming into the shelter of the Isle of Wight which was welcomed as the quartering seas had become very unpleasant. As we passed Bembridge I glanced back and saw a cruise liner broadside on down toward the Nab. Thinking it was heading up Channel I took no further notice. It wasn't until Saturday morning when I spoke to Lenny to discover that he was adjacent to the liner awaiting the arrival of the Bembridge Lifeboat. I will say no more as he will be telling his story in due course. We continued up the Solent and dropped anchor in Osborne Bay at 0430 to get some shut eye before heading for the Hamble to hand the boat back.

**Messrs Pearce,
O'Dwyer and Mallon
assume the position.
Le Havre**



SCUTTLEBUTT

May Cruise 2016

by Lenny Wheeler - the other part of the story! (Three Men in a Boat)

The plan was to meet up with the Club charter boat in Fecamp on the Spring Rally and I was to take up any surplus crew members on 'Anita', my Dehler 31. In the event the club boat could not be filled and I ended up with two mates, Russell from my village and Ted from Chichester Marina. The plans started initially very well and we had a good sail across to Fecamp, followed by Frank Hooper and his merry band a tide later. They had experienced some problems with their charter and ended up with a huge vessel that one could either hold a party on below decks or sub charter to the Royal Navy to use as a below deck aircraft hanger, not dissimilar to that on the new Queen Elizabeth. As yet of course she has no aircraft and that is probably another story.

After a night of the obligatory moules frites and red wine we retired to the charter boat. I, still having aboard a bottle of red, brought aboard the previous month by the late John Batley, took this with me. We gratefully partook of same and had a quiet moment to remember John, a staunch member of the Club and a true gent.

The next day we left and went our own ways, we going to St Valery, Frank to Le Havre. I had not been to St Valery before and could see it was obviously very nice prior to WW2 but was now rather sad. The entrance is just a cleft in the cliffs and the centre of the village is a 1960 shopping square built to replace what the Allies destroyed. (We need to do it again!) We returned to Fecamp the next day into a good blow and rain, intending to leave the following morning for Chichester. However the wind was still strong from the North West so both we and Frank

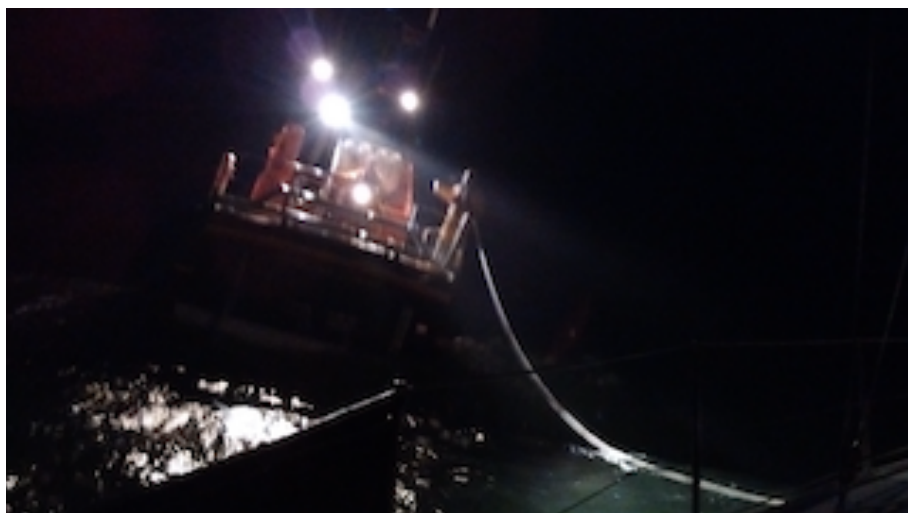
independently took the same decision to delay our departure until after lunch when the forecast was for the wind to back South West force 5/6. Ideal! The forecast also included the likelihood of fog in the Solent which neither of us could believe given the wind strength. The forecast was right.

We had a good push across the Channel until 2am, when approximately 7 miles short of the Chichester entrance, in fog, the engine stopped and I lost steerage. At the time I thought we had caught something round the stern gear, but this transpired not to be correct. We had just lost all forward motion and therefore could not steer. The fact that it was dark and foggy obscured the real situation. It was at this point the main sail split and we were left floundering with no engine, no sails and, we thought, no steering. To compound our misery there was a large 'block of flats' type cruise ship near by, jilling around waiting to pick up a Pilot at the Nab Tower Pilot Boarding Area just where we were. From prior radio conversations we knew he had arrived early and had to circle, waiting for about an hour. It is very difficult in the fog to gauge distances, especially at night, but he was certainly too close for comfort. It was around this time that I thought it was a good idea to call up the Coastguard on the

radio. They responded very quickly, the cavalry arriving over the horizon in less than 20 minutes, soon having us in tow to Portsmouth. Chichester was not viable due to the tide state. We were left on the fuelling berth at Gosport Marina, being moved later by Marina staff to a more suitable berth while I attempted to sort things out.

Later that morning the local marine engineer turned out and after changing the fuel filter was still unable to get fuel from the tank, even with the suction from a stirrup pump. The tank was taken out and steam cleaned to reveal a large quantity of black sludge. For the uninitiated, there lives on the interface between the diesel fuel and any water at the bottom of the tank a bug that thinks it an ideal environment for life and the black sludge was the result of the additives I use creating black dead bugs. The tank was painstakingly put back, only to discover a leak which the sludge had concealed. The tank was removed a second time and repaired temporarily with epoxy. This enabled me to get back to Chichester where the tank was removed yet again for a permanent repair.

A replacement Mainsail was obtained from Kemp Sails and we are now ready for more adventures. Oh, the joys of sailing!



Lenny is towed to safety by the RNLI

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The Round the Island Race July 2016

by Frank Hooper

“Brainwave of Brighton” is a Maxi 1000 cruiser/racer that I crew on from Brighton Marina Yacht Club. The name comes from the fact that the owner is a consultant neurosurgeon! One of the races we regularly take part in is the annual Round the Island Race, and 2016 was no different. As usual we had delivered the boat to the Royal Southern Yacht Club marina in the Hamble on Friday 1st July in preparation for the race the next day. Our usual crew for the race consists of 6, 5 of whom regularly race out of Brighton and the sixth an irregular member of the crew who always joins us for this race.

For a change, the start time was at the civilised time of 0930 on Saturday morning. Weather forecasts leading up to the race were as usual a bit vague, but all seemed to indicate enough wind for a fairly fast rounding (our usual time was between 7 and 8 hours). On the morning of the race I checked all the various weather sites and not much had changed, with generally south westerly 20 knots plus gusts. The only odd one out was the Met Office inshore forecast which forecast W or SW 5/6 occasionally 7.

As we went to the start line it was clear that we had a little more wind than expected and we put in a reef as well as going for the number 3 headsail which was the smallest we had. At the start there was 15 plus knots which combined to give an apparent wind of 20 knots or more. The beat down the West Solent was the usual mixture of avoiding other boats when on port tack and vice versa. Unfortunately quite a number seemed to be oblivious of the Rules of the Road, and there were numerous near misses before a pair of

sports boats decided to T-bone each other just in front of us leading to frantic avoiding action if we were not going to join the acrimonious discussion already taking place between the two skippers.

We reached the Needles without further alarm, and having already decided that we would not be flying the spinnaker I was looking forward to a relaxing reach down to St Catherine's Point. As we turned the corner the first Mayday of the day went up. This was the yacht “Alchemist” owned by the Commodore of the Island Sailing Club which had tried to sneak through the gap between the Needles and the wreck of the SS Varvassi which has been there since 1947. They failed and hit it heavily. We passed them just east of the Needles as the yacht sank beneath the waves with both the inshore lifeboat and a MOD patrol boat in attendance. Fortunately all crew were safe.

The seas down the back of the Wight were as bad as I have ever seen them with a 25 plus knot wind gusting 35 knots against an ebbing spring tide bringing the perfect conditions for large breaking waves rolling in from the south west. The next 3 hours was a roller coaster down large following waves trying to stop the boat broaching as the waves passed under the hull. All the while almost continuous ‘Maydays’ were filling the airwaves with numerous ‘man over board’ calls and dis-masted yachts all over the place. We managed to stay intact as we rounded St Catherine's and headed for Dunnose Point. In response the sea kicked up even more in the shallower waters, and with it the frequency of distress calls. By now the Coastguard had stopped using the normal Channel Zero for the lifeboats and had reverted to Channel 16. As far as I could hear, every life boat and rescue craft from Yarmouth to Portsmouth plus helicopters and other craft were deployed on rescue tasks. The Solent Coastguard controller was a female who

did a fantastic job juggling all the calls and re-tasking rescue vessels to more urgent calls.

From our perspective we were still holding it together and making good time having rounded St Catherine's 4 hours from the start, that was until we needed to gybe from starboard to port tack. As we went into the gybe, a manoeuvre we have done hundreds of times before, the seas caught us and the boom came across rather faster than intended, and once equilibrium had been restored we realised that the mainsheet was jammed in it's blocks. Not good in the conditions. All efforts to free the blocks, including lowering the main twice, failed and we were left with little option but to retire hurt. As we bowled along under headsail and engine the mayhem continued around us with a mast going down some 200 yards from us and another BMYC yacht splitting it's mainsail from boom to head ahead. As we rounded Bembridge Ledge buoy and came into the shelter of the Island, the seas moderated and with it the distress calls. The last one was off Seaview when yet another man over board call went up. Solent Coastguard were out of resources and had to divert the Portsmouth Inshore from another task to cover that one. We pulled into the Hamble soon after 1700 hours after the most hectic day I have ever heard on the radio.

On getting home the next day I was interested to see what coverage there had been on the media. I had phoned home when we got in the previous evening, something I don't usually do but was concerned in case the media had gone over board (!) with their reporting and my wife was worried. Shouldn't have bothered, all the media could talk about was some massive catamaran completing the race in a couple of hours or so, nary a mention of the rescue services and the injuries to crew.

It's a funny old world.