

The Tomahawk

The bulletin of the Tomahawk Owners Association

Autumn 2007

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Editorial – a new hand on the Tiller!

Some of you may know that our previous bulletin editor, Richard Mayhew, has bought a Sadler 32 and his Tomahawk, Crystal, is for sale. Consequently, Richard feels that he should now retire from the post of bulletin editor – he doubts that TOA members will want to hear about the Sadler! In his stead, I have offered to take on the editor's job – unless there's another editor out there!

In the mean time, thanks are due to Richard for his many years of editorship and wishes for many good seasons sailing in his new boat.

Gordon Keyte (*Nokomis*)

AGM, January 19, 2008

Time flies and no sooner than one AGM has been held, it's time to plan the next! This will be on Saturday January 19, 2008 and will be held at the Barn Travel Inn, Hockley Heath. The Agenda will be sent out nearer the date, together with details of location, etc. We usually plan to have lunch at about 1230 with the AGM starting at 1400hrs.

EAST COAST TOMAHAWK RALLY : July 6 – 8, 2007

Three Tomahawks made it to the East Coast Rally on July 6 – 8: Doug Baynton and Graham Farley (later joined by Bill Baynton) in *Vandini*; Roger and Sue Mander plus son and girlfriend in *Varuna II*; and Gordon Knight and Don Baines in *Ceildh*. May and June's appalling weather had prevented Don getting *Malibu* ready to launch in time. Mick Ballance (*Mojave*) succumbed to a summer 'flu virus the week before the rally, and was unable to join us.

All three Tomahawks sailed down the River Blackwater on Friday afternoon's ebb tide, with a blustery F4/5 following wind. Picture 1 shows Gordon passing Thirslet Spit buoy under jib alone, and still making a good five knots through the water. Picture 2 shows Doug, Graham and Gordon enjoying a well-earned cup of tea in Bradwell Marina, before moving on to something stronger. The counter of an Essex smack may be seen in the foreground. A convivial Friday evening was spent in "The Green Man", with the sort of yarning that Tomahawk owners like to indulge in.



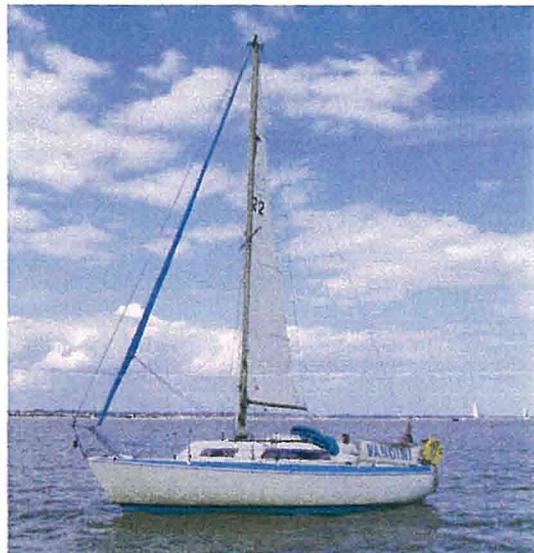
PICTURE 1



PICTURE 2



PICTURE 3



PICTURE 4

The original plan had been to sail round to the River Crouch on the Saturday morning, using the inshore Rays'n (Ray Sand) fisherman's channel. However, this has rapidly silted up over the past couple of years, and the Crouch Commissioners had not placed the customary yellow "best water" mark where the Rays'n joins the Crouch. In 1892, East Coast pioneer yachtsman Frank Cowper had reported twelve feet in the Rays'n at high water. Today you are lucky to find four. The alternative route into the Crouch from the Blackwater involves sailing 9NM eastwards past the top of the Buxey Sand, and into the Spitway which leads to the Crouch via the Whitaker Channel. From the Swin spitway buoy to North Fambridge (our intended overnight destination) is a further 18NM.

Saturday morning's shipping forecast gave us westerly F4/5 gusting F6, and a pontoon conference found all three skippers and their crews agreeing on a change of plan to keep us in the rivers, rather than battle 18NM to North Fambridge into a fresh westerly. Picture 3 shows *Varuna II* feeling her way out of Bradwell Marina as soon as the rising tide gave us water over the entrance bar. *Vandini* and *Ceilidh* soon followed.

Our new plan was to sail out of the Blackwater and into the Colne, anchoring for lunch in the sheltered Pyefleet Channel round the back of Mersea Island. This was accomplished with the wind never exceeding fifteen knots. On our way into the Pyefleet we passed *Pioneer*, a newly-restored East Coast skillinger. Built at Rowhedge on the River Colne in 1864 with a length of 59 feet and 8 foot draught, she earned her living more than a hundred years ago dredging for

sprats and deep-sea oysters off the Dutch Terschelling Bank. Thinking she was gone for the day, *Vandini* and *Ceilidh* set about rafting up on her mooring (Gordon executing a particularly fine rolling hitch onto *Pioneer's* thick sisal mooring strop), and were about to be joined by *Varuna* when *Pioneer's* tan topsail re-appeared around Mersea Stone heading back up the Colne. Like a speeded-up film, the three Tomahawks swiftly vacated *Pioneer's* mooring and headed further up the Pyefleet where they all anchored individually for a peaceful lunch. (*Pioneer* then tacked round and sailed serenely back out of the Colne, never to re-appear ! We can only assume the young people on board were receiving a sailing lesson.)

Part two of our plan was to take the tide up the Colne, sailing through the tidal barrier at Wivenhoe, and having a late afternoon drink in "The Anchor" at Rowhedge. The wind stayed a gentle F2 – 3, and we enjoyed buoy-hopping up the twisting narrow river, and touching the mud from time to time when we strayed too far from the marked channel (sometimes no more than a boat's length). It appeared that several other boats had the same idea as ourselves, for a steady procession of assorted craft, including a couple of smacks, headed upstream, enjoying the beam reach offered by the light westerly wind.

The river bends due west beyond Wivenhoe, so we dropped sails before the barrier and motored on towards Rowhedge. This section is tree-lined, and the wind against us was no more than 5 knots. Our next change of plan came as we rounded the bend into Rowhedge and found the river full of smacks, yachts, dinghies, canoes, dragon boats, rafts and other floating objects – it was Rowhedge regatta ! The long bend by "The Anchor" was filled with spectators, and mooring at the pub was impossible. We carefully motored through the festivities. A canoe race was actually in progress – how they must have cursed the three twenty-five footers nervously trying to keep to the middle of the dying flood tide.

Soon the inevitable happened. *Vandini*, confronted by a canoe paddling furiously down mid channel, was forced to take rapid avoiding action and stuck fast with both keels on a shoulder of mud almost right opposite "The Anchor". Doug and Graham enjoyed an involuntary ringside seat until *Ceilidh*, who had managed to turn around upstream of the festivities, returned with a long warp and managed to pull *Vandini* back into the channel, just about at the top of the tide. For future years we made a mental note to check out dates of local regattas – even for places our initial plan has no intention of visiting!

Things by now were looking desperate: it was 1800 hours, and we still hadn't had a drink ! There was nothing for it but to set full sail and take the ebb the 4NM down the Colne (taking *great* care not to stray outside the dredged channel on a falling tide). Brightlingsea (the only cinque port in Essex) was to be our overnight destination, and we were soon secure alongside the floating pontoons opposite the Colne Yacht Club. (We *do* like Brightlingsea Marina – the harbourmaster and his team are so courteous as they handle your lines, and call you "sir", even when one's attempt to come alongside with two knots of ebb running through the creek sometimes leaves much to be desired.)

We ate well in the Colne Yacht Club that evening, and made up for our abortive and abstemious voyage to Rowhedge with a couple of pints (or more) of Adnams. Our decision to stay in the rivers, rather than venture further out into the Thames estuary was vindicated when we met a single-handed yachtsman who had just sailed across from Faversham on the Kent side of the estuary, and had experienced F5s and 6s as he picked his way through the West Swin, Middle Deep and the Spitway.

Sunday morning brought us sunshine, with a light wind. The tide had already peaked at 0600, but we were in no hurry to take the ebb out of the Colne because the flood tide to take us back up the Blackwater didn't start to make until just after midday. Even more important, *Vandini* and *Ceilidh* couldn't get on to their swinging moorings at the Blackwater Sailing Club in Colliers Reach until two and a half hours before the afternoon high water, which was predicted at 1906.

A leisurely drift out of the Colne was a pleasant way to spend a Sunday morning, and we did not feel any need to "cut the corner" into the Blackwater by risking grounding on the Cocum Hills route past the beacon marking the wreck of the *Moliette*. As we rounded the Colne

number 8 buoy we detected a freshening of the wind, and *Ceilidh* was the first to drop anchor for lunch between Bradwell power station and its cooling-water baffle.

It was the East Coast's annual Three Piers Race (Osea pier, Clacton pier and Walton pier) organised by Marconi Sailing Club, and the river was soon filled with catamaran dinghies racing home, just as the wind increased from the F1 – 2 it had been all morning to a top F4. Most of the competitors chose to sail outside the Bradwell baffle, but one chose the smoother water inside the baffle, less than one hundred yards from where Gordon and Don were already tucking into their lunch. They watched in alarm as the helmsman suddenly lost his toe straps and tumbled backwards into the water. The cat continued to sail downwind, and it soon became obvious that its crew did not have the strength or experience to round up and sail back to retrieve the helm. Two or three safety boats were visible the other side of the baffle, but none seemed aware of the potential tragedy just out of their sight. A call to "Marconi safety boat" on the VHF elicited no response. As Gordon prepared to up anchor and motor across to assist the helmsman in the water, he was relieved to see *Vandini* sail into the area. Doug sized up the situation and put *Vandini* alongside the grateful helmsman who was soon reunited with his boat and crew. Picture 4 shows *Vandini*, now the rescuer rather than the rescued, setting off from Bradwell on her way back up the Blackwater. *Varuna* returned to her swinging mooring off Marconi Sailing Club, and *Vandini* and *Ceilidh* picked up their moorings off the Blackwater SC at 1645, two hours and twenty minutes before high water.

Not the rally we had planned, but one full of interest and incident. Not to mention good beer (eventually), good food and good friendship. Perhaps the winds will prove more favourable next year ?

Don Baines (*Ceilidh*)

Guernsey Rally 2007

Its been a few years since *Cochise* (in previous ownership) ventured beyond the Poole-to-Solent bus run, and nearly ten years since I last sailed across the Channel – so I welcomed the opportunity to make both my first single handed 'going foreign' and my first extended trip in *Cochise* to sail in company with yachts from the Hythe Sailing Club and head out from Yarmouth IOW for Cherbourg en route to St Peter Port for the 2007 Guernsey Regatta.

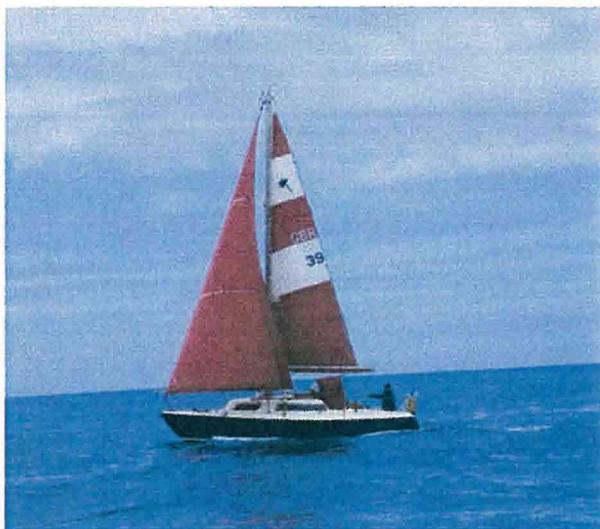
I'd arranged to have *Cochise* lifted out and jet-washed on Tuesday afternoon – surprisingly the hull wasn't too fouled – but the prop really merited a good cleaning, and I bumped over the mud Tuesday evening (LW springs) to catch the 1830 bridge out of Poole. I over-nighted on a borrowed mooring off Brownsea Island, followed by an early morning sail to Yarmouth to meet up later on Wednesday with *Just Magic* , *Yselvor* & *Futura 2*.

We left Yarmouth on the last of the ebb early on Thursday morning – heading 180 after passing the Needles Fairway, variously sailing and motor-sailing with winds and fickle breezes toward Cherbourg. *Yselvor*, some 10 miles out , turned back with a leaking stern gland – and then there were three. By 1300 I'd clocked up nearly 20 miles XTE when the wind picked up and the tide turned and the XTE wound down again until we only needed a small correction to make the easterly entrance to Cherbourg and onto the visitors pontoons by 18.30, having sighted land some 4 hours previously.

On Friday we didn't slip until 1245 for Cap de la Hague – a costly delay as we were headed and spent the next seven hours battling wind and tides just to get back to Cherbourg to lick wounds, dry out and grab a super meal ashore. Quite a lesson! Saturday somehow turned into R&R in Cherbourg- with shopping for a set of breathables and a mere drop of wine. The R&R included the normal maintenance – trying to improve the water resistance of the forehatch , and cutting holes in the bilge cross members so a single bilge pump point took out more than the trickle of water from aft so my rugs wouldn't get soaked again!

Sunday saw another go at reaching Cap de la Hague and on to Guernsey – I tried the inshore passage along the Normandy coast, looking for the counter current while the other two boats punched against the last of the foul tide, I eventually found one and a third knots of tide, but not enough to get ahead at Cap de la Hague which we all rounded about the same time with 3+ knots of tide, turning for Guernsey and the Little Russell at 1355.

Crossing the Banc de la Scholes further tested my forehatch and, I'm told, frequently showed my beautifully clean keel to *Just Magic* as we bounced across in great showers of spray – exhilarating in the blustery sunshine but I suspect it would have seemed more ominous if it were black and thundery. The final turn down the Little Russell saw me taking the port side of the channel, planning to sneak close to Roustel and a straight line to St Peter Port on a half knot of tide, but when it suddenly upped to two knots I had to start and gun the engine to avoid Roustel followed by a victory 360 just outside St Peter Port while the other two made a more sedate approach. We joined up on the waiting pontoon until there was two metres over the sill when we could find a finger berth and settle down for the night.



Tuesday night I slipped to the outer harbour, ready for refuelling and a 1000 start on my own to Alderney on Wednesday morning. There was some breeze and some motor sailing and also some strange sights – a 'tug & tow' with strange lights turned out to be the Casquets. Another very strange vessel heading South across the Swinge turned out to be *Ortac*. With a fairly close view of the Garden Rocks and a buttock clenching guess at where the Braye submerged breakwater ended I finally turned onto a mooring in Braye harbour and caught the water taxi for an hour ashore and a bit of grocery shopping. I told the harbour master when he came to collect mooring fees that Braye didn't

appear to have changed much since I was last there in 1961 – he reckoned another 46 years would still see it little changed!

Wednesday before dawn saw me creeping out of Braye, hoping the reliability of my memory of the isolated rock and of my clearing line would see me clear . . . they did (thank Neptune!) and I headed – wind on the nose – for Anvil Point, 60 miles ahead. Having raised my Q flag at 13 miles off Anvil and heading for an apparent fog bank, I called up the Condor Sea Cat passing to starboard if he'd got a good radar return from *Cochise*. His reply: yes, very good, thanks to the SeaMe radar signal enhancer I'd added to the masthead back in April. The fog bank turned out to be slight mist and as I got closer until I could see Old Harry ahead and eventually turned into Poole harbour – having motored the whole way from Alderney.

With Customs (National Yachtline) permission to lower my Q flag I felt the trip was virtually over, made the 1830 bridge opening and was back on my pontoon in time to freshen up and get a meal ashore. The whole trip has raised my confidence in the Tomahawk and confirmed my intentions of wider horizons – with hopefully more of the UK South West coast this year, and Southern Brittany next.

Ian Bremner (Cochise)

Round the Island Race 2007

Last year's Round the Island Race was a debacle because the organisers arranged a start time that meant that the late starters (the majority of the ISC handicapped fleet) could not make the Needles before the tide turned. *Bumble B* managed to pass Hurst Castle and hug the northern shore before the tide turned – we could probably have made some progress in this channel if were it not for a wind shift that meant we had to recover the spinnaker and then proceed on a beat. This wind shift caused much confusion amongst the fleet of about 15 boats and before we had regained our composure we were squirted back to Yarmouth – needless to say the race was now a lost cause, so we retired.

This year's race was a different story – the organisers had arranged a 0530 start for the ISC handicapped fleet which allowed plenty of time for the fleet to round the Needles before the tide turned. Sensible, you may think but I very rarely see this time of the morning! We left the mooring about an hour and a half before the scheduled start time. We emerged from Portsmouth Harbour entrance and were met by a force 3 or 4 on the nose which meant that we needed to motor all the way. We plugged our way through an anything but calm sea – our speed reduced to zero each time we met a wave. Whilst en-route we began to set the sails and in the process managed to lose the tails of the topping lift and lazy jack ropes – they were wafting in the breeze and very difficult to capture without falling overboard!! To cut a long story short – we arrived at the start line some 30 minutes behind the final starting gun. To be honest, the sight of the mass of sails ahead of us looked quite impressive until it dawned on us that we needed to catch some of them if we were not to maintain our position of very last across both the start and finish lines!

With long beats to windward we soon made up the ground and we were amongst the back markers of the 'purple' fleet by the time we reached the needles. Now was the time to raise the spinnaker. OK - it was some time since the spinnaker was last used and true to form the pistons in the end fittings had corroded and needed a considerable amount of persuasion and liberal amounts of WD40 to get them to operate. This was eventually achieved and with spinnaker flying we made great inroads into the back markers of the 'white' fleet.

As we approached the Bembridge Ledge Buoy the time had come to retrieve the spinnaker and unfurl the Genoa. Surprisingly this was achieved with ease and we started a tacking sequence up the Solent towards the finishing line. It's great being on a Starboard tack and we managed to gain ground on many boats that were on a port tack. Our jubilation at our gains were short lived since we eventually had to tack (port) and proceeded to receive some of our own medicine.

Half the fleet chose to hug the mainland coast and the other half the IOW shore – with much amusement one largish boat was seen to run aground on Ryde Sands. It was eventually re-floated with much assistance from a number of ribs with large engines. By the time we were in reach of the finishing line (on a port tack) the fleet that hugged the mainland started to arrive in great numbers – all on starboard. Mayhem ensued as we were closed in by boats from behind and from the IOW and mainland sides, as well as those in front of us – all in very close proximity.. On a couple of occasions we just had nowhere to go so were in breach of sailing rules by forcing others to take evasive action. I was expecting a host of protests but thankfully there were none that I know of. In fact fellow sailors were very understanding (thanks to all concerned).

We finally crossed the line with a corrected time of 8 hours 52 minutes 16 seconds.

Now the real race started – we had to approach the barge Blade Runner to hand in our time sheet and to collect our spoils, tankard, tool kit and lip salve (a bit late for this race). Most boats joined an orderly queue to approach the barge but there were a number of skippers/crew who thought they were above queuing and had no regard for rules of the road or common sense – in fact quite obnoxious. There were a few minor collisions and with the tide running at a fast rate of knots some were unable to maintain steerageway. The organisers could learn from this and perhaps have a fleet of ribs that come out to meet queuing craft

Each year *Starfall* (another Tomahawk) has just beaten us:

| | | |
|------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2007 | corrected time for <i>Starfall</i> | 8hours 37minutes 30seconds |
| 2007 | corrected time for <i>Bumble B</i> | 8hours 52minutes 16seconds |
| 2005 | corrected time for <i>Starfall</i> | 10hours 35minutes 26seconds |
| 2005 | corrected time for <i>Bumble B</i> | 10hours 37minutes 51seconds |

Sadly, *Starfall* is not a member of the TOA so, if anyone sees her out on the water feel free to advertise our association!

This year we were about 15 minutes behind *Starfall* on corrected time compared with about 2 minutes in 2005; so, considering our late start (30 minutes) we had made up considerable time. This could be the result of superb sailing techniques or possibly the effects of a more favourable tide for the late start. Personally, I favour the former.

Despite the lack of other Tomahawks the day was fantastic with ideal sailing conditions.

I will be entering again next year and really hoping to see a few more Tomahawks in the race.

Tony Hepworth (*Bumble B of Gosport*)

Any more subscriptions?

Now wearing my Treasurer's hat, I'm afraid there are some members who've not yet paid their subs for 2007. If this Bulletin has a Red Spot on it, it means that I've no record of you having paid for 2007 and would be delighted to receive a cheque from you! If you have a red spot and think you've paid please let me know – my email is jengo@talk21.com, address:

Cherry Bank, Dippenhall Street, Crondall, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 5NZ.

Gordon Keyte

New web site

The old TOA web site was open to misuse and we now have a new web site for which a password is required to gain access to the forum pages. Ian Bremner is responsible for liaison with our web master and will release the password to paid up members. Ian can be contacted on ianbremner77@btinternet.com

Next Bulletin

The next issue of the bulletin is planned for February 2008. This will give a report on the AGM and also plans for forthcoming rallies. There will also be articles on Tomahawk refurbishment!