



Prawle Point

No: 49

'eyes along the coast'

Autumn 2014

CLASSIC SAILING

Taking a quiet road towards St. Anthony Head on the Roseland Peninsula, it is easy to pass by a wooden shed, offset to the left, where Classic Sailing has its headquarters.

Once inside, a warm welcome awaits from Adam Purser who, with his wife, Debbie, set up a business in 1996 based on their pilot cutter, *Eve of St. Mawes* which became a centre for RYA training. They were soon approached by owners of other classic vessels, from pilot cutters to tall ships, who needed an agency to market their boats by attracting experienced or would-be sailors who found the lure of cruising, in traditional sailing craft, an irresistible challenge. On the office walls are displayed photos of the many glorious craft co-ordinated from this small Cornish centre of international sailing. The intention is to keep each boat special, sailing within her favoured waters and not in any way competing with others for crew.

Longest serving with the company so far is the two-masted brig, *Stavros Niarchos*, built by Appledore shipyard in 2001. Her programme for the last ten years has been all around the UK coast until taking off to the Canaries for winter cruising.

Grayhound, a three-masted lugger is easily identifiable when passing Prawle Point during visits to Torbay, Brixham, Dartmouth and Salcombe, by virtue of her unusual rig. Built in 2012 from a design inspired by a Cornish privateer of 1776, her wooden hull, traditionally fastened with trenails, boasts a lengthy 108 feet from bowsprit to bumpkin and sports standing lugs, where yards remain on one side of the mast with tack set close to the mast; having no spars at deck level is an obvious advantage. On long tacks, a dipping lug is used on the foremast for easier manoeuvrability. Her

cruising grounds include Madeira, islands of the Azores, Cape Verde and Canaries and the Caribbean.

Britain's last wooden trading vessel, *Bessie Ellen*, a ketch built in Plymouth in 1904, boasts a cargo hold now converted into spacious accommodation. She sails the west country during early and late season but spends summer cruising extensively around the Faroe Islands and Scotland. *Eda Frandsen*, a 56' gaff cutter, also takes off from her home port of Falmouth to sail the Cornish and Brittany coasts, before spending most of the summer among the western isles of Scotland.



Bessie Ellen sailing in Scotland

Two unique tall ships are the 65 metre, three-masted barque, *Tenacious* and her slightly smaller sister ship *Lord Nelson*, both linked with the Jubilee Sailing Trust. They were designed and built to enable people of all physical

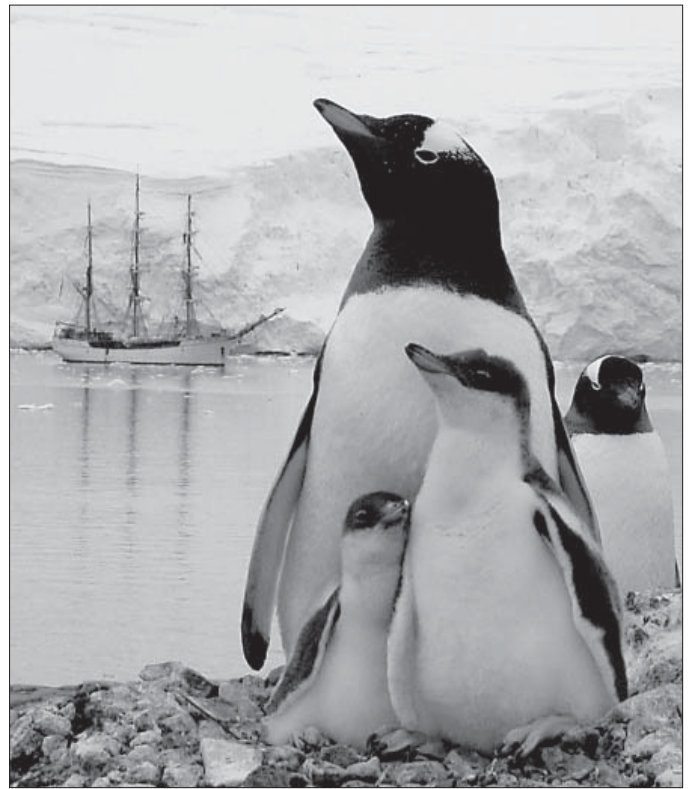
abilities to sail side by side on equal terms; 37,000 having done so since they were launched. *Tenacious* has wide, flat decks with wheel chair lift between deck levels and even a 'runway' on to the bowsprit, a hearing loop, speaking compass when required and hydraulic assisted steering. The *Lord Nelson* is currently on a two year, round the world trip, offering places to sailors from host countries as she goes. Her triumphant return to UK was expected in September after which her winter programme will include visits to Casablanca, Cuba, Costa Rica and the Caribbean until next April. She hoists square sails on the main and foremasts, her only break with tradition being that the t'gallant and royal sails can be furled from the deck. While climbing the mast is not obligatory, keen blind sailors and wheelchair users have been hoisted or guided aloft.

Topsail schooner *Oosterschelde*, built in 1917, uses a three masted, fore and aft rig plus two square sails, from her days as a cargo vessel under the Dutch flag and is now registered as an 'historic national monument'. She has thrice

circumnavigated the world, visiting places as far apart as Spitzbergen and Indonesia. Her crew specialise in natural and maritime history, walking and local culture ashore.

Also Dutch is the very popular 56 metre, 330 ton, three-masted barque *Europa*, built in 1911. She enjoys a northern hemisphere summer in European waters then sets off to South Georgia, the Falkland Islands, thence to remote Antarctic research stations of South Orkney for a southern summer of wildlife expeditions where crew often find themselves up close with dolphins and sperm whales. She follows the trade winds to maximise downwind sailing, performs well in the roller-coasters of the roaring forties or, in lighter tropical conditions, can set an imposing suite of thirty sails. Specialist lecturers on board offer studies of albatross and penguins, whales, the weather and even kelp!

Classic Sailing originated when Adam and Debbie, inspired by seeing *Leader* in Scotland, found *Eve of St. Mawes* in Exeter, bought and fitted her out for their first voyage from Turf Lock to Brixham. Since then the agency has flourished spectacularly, yet, given their history of sailing with the Ocean Youth Club for several years, they need to escape from the office on many a cruise, delighting in the moments of joy expressed on the faces of newcomers. It is interesting to note that the clientele is getting younger - the average age last year dropped by five years - attributable, they surmise, from Facebook and general internet communication. Debbie takes responsibility for the winter refit, safety consciousness and good seamanship are top priorities but competition also ranks highly with keen entry in sailing events. Classic Sailing runs a three day Pilot Cutter Review every year from Fowey, racing is regularly held in Carrick Roads, they participate in Falmouth and Fowey race weeks, working boat championships and a big



Penguin Family, Europa in background

event this year is the Falmouth to Greenwich Tall Ships race which began on August 31st when 39 vessels were expected to breast the starting line.

Adam and Debbie Purser are both professional skippers of traditional boats with wide experience as tall ship sailors. The Classic Sailing website gives detailed information of the many other boats linked to this amazing Cornish agency.

*You probably read about Salcombe Lifeboat towing one man and his dog into Dartmouth,
for my sins I instigated the call out.*

ONE MAN AND HIS DOG

On the 26th of June we were enjoying a cold wine on our deck, watching the returning yachts fighting the ebb tide and diminishing breezes, a setting sun adding to a spectacular summer evening at Hallsands.

At about 2030hrs a small dinghy rounded Start Point, under sail and making little headway, as this is somewhat unusual, I decided to keep an eye on it.....NCI training!

Over the next hour it had only progressed about one mile some of which involved a short stint of rowing and a lot of drifting in circles. Just one person aboard raised a couple of thoughts - maybe a charity circumnavigation of the UK by Wayfarer (not the first) or a youngster struggling in the now offshore land breeze?

With dusk closing in, a quick call to Brixham Coastguard seemed the sensible option if only for their opinion. So distance and bearing from our house, and additional bearings to identify our position, were passed - (NCI training works!)

They requested I monitor the progress for another hour but, with the light failing and no lights being shown by the dinghy, they agreed to act. A team was dispatched from Dartmouth to try and get a visual confirmation of position,

but unable to do this, they arrived on my doorstep at about 2215hrs. A new position had been given to Brixham as the dinghy was, by now, only about 0.5 nm from the Skerries buoy. The coastguard verified this with my binoculars as the lighthouse illuminated the sails. They confirmed the Wayfarer dinghy as single handed and at risk of being mown down in the dark!

Salcombe lifeboat received the information at 22.36, launched at 22.50 and were on scene at 23.21. They spoke to the skipper, an unemployed, live aboard, on passage from Plymouth to Portsmouth with his dog for company, who reckoned he was OK and had a torch! After a discussion centred around lack of equipment, i.e. lifejacket, navigation lights, radio, flares and food for his dog, he agreed to be towed into Dartmouth for the night. Apparently, on reaching the pontoon, the dog ran away! That's crew for you! Salcombe lifeboat departed from Dartmouth at 00.39 and was back on station at 01.39.

On chatting to the crew later, they did add a slightly happier ending in that man and dog were reunited and sailed on to be rescued again in similar circumstances.

Ian Berridge, Watchkeeper at NCI Prawle Point.

NCI PRAWLE POINT: INCIDENTS TO DATE



26.05.14 Dive boat *Falcon II* had divers down 0.5 miles west of Prawle Point. When a sport boat drove straight through the diving area, *Falcon II* warned them on Ch.16, sounded a foghorn and notified Brixham Coastguard but was unable to identify the craft. Watchkeepers gave the name, *Bella* to Brixham and were later called by Salcombe harbour office reporting that staff had spoken to the skipper of *Bella* and told him to contact Brixham.

05.06.14 We logged yacht *Gone Away* and watched her sail very close to rocks in Elender Cove. Brixham phoned to say a member of the public had seen a light glinting on a vessel near Gara Rock. We advised the vessel was likely to be *Gone Away* which was later confirmed on ChM1 by Prawle Point Mobile who had been tasked to investigate further. A watch was maintained as requested and we were thanked for our assistance.

27.06.14 Yacht *D'Lerius* called Brixham reporting that her genoa was stuck while fully deployed. She was close to Bolt Head and decided to turn back to Salcombe. Brixham alerted Salcombe Harbour office and asked watchkeepers to track the yacht visually until she was safely across the Bar and met by the harbour launch. Thence they confirmed to Brixham that *D'Lerius* was out of danger.

28.06.14 A VHF call from Brixham CG to any vessel in the Prawle Point vicinity requested sighting of a single manned ocean going kayak, as they had received a 999 call. The coastguard also telephoned Prawle Point who asked for details of the kayak. Someone from Lannacombe Farm informed Prawle that they could see the kayak 200m offshore in Lannacombe Bay and occupant did not appear in distress. Watchkeepers passed the updated information to Brixham who tasked Salcombe lifeboat and Prawle Point mobile who subsequently confirmed they had spoken to the kayaker. All services were stood down.

06.07.14 Watchkeepers heard a PanPan from *Little Blue*, a single handed sports boat with engine failure, 0.5 nautical miles off Gara Rock. Brixham phoned asking if we had the casualty visual. We subsequently identified the vessel. FV Nethergill had already called Brixham saying they would go to help, however a rib reached the casualty first and towed her into Salcombe.

19.07.14 We heard a VHF call from BxCG trying to raise yacht *Klahani* with no response. Brixham telephoned to ask if we had her visual. The casualty then gave her position on Ch67 and we were able to confirm she had been taken in tow by yacht *Katrina* and confirmed the position. A harbour launch was called to the scene and took *Klahani* in tow for Salcombe thus relieving *Katrina* to continue her passage. Watchkeepers kept Brixham informed of these activities.

24.07.14 A VHF call on Ch67 was heard from RIB *Excalibur* who was losing drive off Start Point. We telephoned Brixham advising position as 0.5 miles from Prawle Point and a PanPan was issued requesting a tow. Salcombe Lifeboat was launched and towed her to safety over the bar.

02.08.14 We logged FV *Moonfleet* off Langerstone Point. She called Brixham to report engine failure. Brixham issued a PanPan but no vessel responded. We informed Brixham we had the casualty in sight and confirmed her position. Salcombe lifeboat was tasked to tow the vessel into Salcombe.

02.08.14 Brixham called asking if we had sight of a small, unmanned, orange dinghy off Starehole reported by member of the public. We confirmed the dinghy was now being towed by a powerboat into the bay although unable to give detailed identification due to distance and glare.

13.08.14 Yacht *Muscadet* reported engine problems to Brixham on Ch16. She was sailing but may need assistance into Salcombe harbour. We confirmed to Brixham we had sight of vessel and were monitoring, later reporting slow progress with wind falling and tide turning against casualty. Brixham asked if we could see the harbour launch which was tasked to take *Muscadet* in tow. Eventually the launch appeared and we were able to confirm actions to Brixham.

19.08.14 FV *Moonfleet* called Brixham reporting engine failure. We reported her in sight. FV *Tenacious* took her in tow towards Salcombe but 11 minutes later she had restarted her engines and continued under her own power. Brixham was advised of the situation.

30.08.14 FV *Moonfleet* radioed Brixham with engine trouble off Langerstone point. We telephoned Brixham giving casualty's position and local conditions. Salcombe lifeboat was tasked. We re-confirmed *Moonfleet's* position and were asked by Brixham if we were ready to con the lifeboat. Vessel taken in tow.

14.09.14 Watchkeepers logged, later noted yacht *Virage II* altering course below Prawle Point and soon heard a PanPan from her requesting a tow as she had propeller trouble and the genoa furling gear was blocked. She gave an incorrect position as off Start Point. We telephoned Brixham with her correct position and subsequent updates as she continued towards Bolt Head. The lifeboat towed her into Salcombe.

20.09.14 Dive boat *Falcon II* called Brixham advising of possible engine fire. They had 9 divers in the water. We told Brixham she was in sight and gave her position. Salcombe AWLB was launched plus the ILB as 7 divers were still in the water. Within 40 minutes from first notification, all divers were on board the AWLB and the casualty was under tow by the ILB.



Friends Of Prawle Point



Cream Teas in the village hall at East Prawle were served on Wednesday August 20th by our ever supportive team of ladies.

A steady stream of visitors came to enjoy generous teas with an amazing array of cakes, win prizes from a well stocked tombola and chat with friends and watchkeepers. The tables were beautifully laid out and all looked so inviting. In spite of the excellent weather, which tends to lure holiday makers to the beach, a clear profit of £371 compared well with previous years.

Tickets for a concert by the notable Carrivick

Sisters on October 11th in West Charleton Village Hall are selling fast. Anyone who has heard them perform knows this event should not be missed.

2014 will finish with a Christmas Party on December 9th for all watchkeepers and their partners.

The format this year will be different to afford more time for socialising, circulating and conversing. It is hoped that some entertainment will emerge from in house so there are two months to get thinking and planning- this has been managed before with huge success!

RAME HEAD NCI STATION

Commanding a view from Bolt Head, 17 miles to the east, to Dodman Point at 23 miles and even, in good visibility, the Lizard 43 miles in a westerly direction, watchkeepers at Rame Head monitor a busy and strategically important sector of the English Channel and the ever active entrance to Plymouth Sound. The Eddystone Lighthouse is 8.4 miles distant.



Rame Head NCI Station

With Devonport being the largest naval base in Western Europe and Brittany Ferries operating around five hundred movements per year at Millbay, watchkeepers at Rame Head monitor Longroom activities via Channel 14 as all military and ferry movements, plus many commercial arrivals and departures, are controlled there by the Queen's Harbour Master. Printing out the daily movements list, issued from the Longroom, becomes a regular task during morning watch and an obvious aid to logging and identifying vessels. Submarines are frequently observed and many military exercises are enacted in full view of the Lookout including routine training of foreign navies. No activities in the Port of Plymouth are allowed when nuclear submarines are manoeuvring. Yachts, registered fishing vessels, angling boats and the full variety of small craft also keep watchkeepers busy from 0800 until 1700 (2000 during summer) 365 days of the year. Luxury motor vessels from Princess Yachts International are regularly seen on trial prior to delivery from their Plymouth shipyard. Channels 0, 16 and 67 are monitored and an extra radio was recently installed to receive the newly dedicated NCI Channel 65 to be used by all stations from October 1st 2014.

Lengthy Whitsand Bay, immediately west of Rame, is popular with divers for exploring HMS *Scylla*, a RN Frigate scuttled there in 2004 to develop as an artificial reef for diving and marine research although, recently, divers have been warned not to enter as access is no longer safe. Wreck of the old sailing boat *Coronation* also lies nearby, but diving is only by permission, with the Longroom to be notified. Records of diving activities are maintained by watchkeepers and submitted at the end of each month to Plymouth Aquarium. Computer links with Plymouth Marine Laboratory are also in evidence. A buoy, 4 miles distant, supplies data on salinity, wave height, turbidity, oxygen and weather to Rame lookout for transfer to offices in Plymouth. In addition it carries a webcam accessed via www.westernchannelobservatory.org.uk Weather Station information is also relayed from the lookout with full screen interpretations in graph format for 24 hour periods. Both these and NCI webcam displays are frequently consulted by local sailors and race officers setting courses outside the breakwater. Optical equipment includes a large pair of binoculars, with integral compass, mounted on a wheeled floor tripod and two telescopes on moveable counter-top tripods. A recently updated radar is linked to a repeater screen, giving magnification, and an additional computer offers AIS displays.

Watchkeeper personnel tend to number around 60 with 6 new recruits currently under training plus a waiting

list. Bi-monthly meetings for watchkeepers offer talks and in-house training and visits have been made to Torpoint ferries, Plymouth University simulator, Looe RNLI, Brixham Coastguard headquarters, Plymouth Marine Laboratory and the Hyperbaric Medical Centre. Social events include lunches every Easter, organised at a local hotel, and an annual barbecue held in a watchkeeper's garden; a run of poor weather terminated a previous tradition of barbecues on the headland. An exercise with Plymouth Lifeboat is conducted once a year and Tamar Coast Guard is the local rescue unit.

In 2010 all thirteen Cornish NCI stations jointly received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

A large public car park close by attracts many visitors and a spur from the coast path between Cawsand and Whitsand brings walkers past the door, many stopping to visit the station, watch duty officers at work, admire the display boards depicting history and wildlife and check the weather, details of which are all displayed on a large whiteboard. Behind the door hangs a grab-bag containing mobile phone, small, laminated OS map of the immediate area, whistle, pen and note-pad, survival blanket, compass and first aid pack for possible use during an incident on the coast path.

The view from here is superb. Dartmoor ponies graze nearby and a path from the lookout leads beguilingly south towards a steep, conical hill, the actual Rame Head, surmounted by a small chapel; the iconic headland known so well to sailors and walkers along this coast. The chapel of St. Michael the Archangel was built in 1397 of local slate with an impressive barrel vaulted roof and is still consecrated. Ecclesiastical service for workers on the local estate doubled with functions as early warning lookout, huer's vantage point for locating shoals of fish and beacon site to warn approaching ships. It was from here that the Spanish Armada was first sighted in 1588, so in 1988, 400 years later the anniversary was marked by a rerun of the beacon system for reporting to London. Time taken from lighting at Rame to the last beacon in the capital was an impressive six minutes! Beyond the chapel, concrete gun emplacements, as first line of defence for Plymouth, date from both world wars.

Now, the distinctive magnolia painted ex-coastguard station of NCI Rame Head serves surveillance and communication purposes. It was restored in 1998 by a team of volunteers under the direction of Ian Chillias, an ex RAF Squadron Leader and Nimrod Captain who recognised the need for 'eyes and ears along the coast' at Rame Head and rustled up funds within the Liskeard and Torpoint areas. It was the eleventh NCI station to be set up, Bass Point being the first. The building is partially maintained by the Mount Edgcumbe House and Country Park, now jointly owned and run by Cornwall Council and Plymouth City Council.

The verse below is taken from the shanty "*Spanish Ladies*" -

Now the first land we made it is called the Deadman
Next Ram Head off Plymouth, off Portland the Wight
We sailed by Beachy, by Fairlee and Dungeness
Till we came abreast of the South Foreland Light.



Please help us to maintain this valuable service by making a donation and becoming a supporter of NCI Prawle Point or becoming a watchkeeper.

Please contact: The Secretary, PO Box 58, Kingsbridge TQ7 2QZ

Station tel. no. 01548 511259 www.nci-prawlepoint.org Cheques to NCI Prawle Point