

FROM FARMS TO BOATS

Just to the left, after crossing the bridge at the head of Frogmore Creek, can be found the office and workshop of Frogmore Boatyard, while a short distance along the lane to South Pool, a gateway on the right gives access to the barns and sheds used for storage and maintenance.

Owner and manager, Garry Elliott, receptionist and secretary, Tamsin, his daughter and an enthusiastic springer spaniel all make visitors most welcome and it soon becomes obvious that the boatyard is a thriving concern.

The business began, on a site where Marine Cottages now stand, as Chesford Boatyard, so named by the first owner, Herbert Pratt after a farm he previously ran in the West Midlands. His first venture was the buying of 12 and 14ft. clinker launches built by Orkney fishermen. They were transported via Kingsbridge railway station for the installation of engines and fitting out in Frogmore. As the business thrived in the 1960s, other boats, designed by Alan Pape and built in Looe, were also finished off in the yard which was renamed The Chesford Yacht and Launch Company.

Yet another change in name occurred when Robin East took over in 1972 to run the enterprise as Chesford Marine. He extended the premises and increased the range of services to include the building, renovation and repair of boats up to 40ft., engine maintenance, storage and the sale of second hand craft. With expansion came the need for yet more space and Leslie Elliott, of Pool Farm, kindly allowed craning out and storage on his field alongside the creek where Frogmore Regatta is now held, although, soon after, there was a preference for using the adjoining barn and surrounding area still used today.

When Cove's Boatyard of Salcombe needed a new base due to residential development, they agreed to take over much of the area by the bridge. This lasted for eighteen months until the site was re-designated for housing and Marine Cottages were built. Meanwhile Robin

East retained the present store, next to Bridge Cottage and concentrated for a time on selling boat hardware to chandlers, boat builders and marine businesses. Subsequently he reverted to laying up and restoring, previous customers returned and business flourished again.

Restoration work included that of the Ruda- a 38ft. motor cruiser built in the 30s. She was moored stern to the bridge for the renewal of planking, deck beams and timbers and is now in use on the Seine. The 32ft. motor sailer Tourmaline was also renovated during this period. The purchase of a boat launcher in 2001 put an end to the costly outlay of crane hiring.

When Robin retired, the Frogmore Boatyard Limited logo, which has become so familiar today, signalled the new

take over in 2007 by Garry Elliott, son of farmer Leslie. Already knowledgeable in nautical affairs and experienced in crane handling, Garry also runs a successful construction company. His employees in the yard are Andy, the engineer and James who specialises in woodwork and painting. They are the sole suppliers of the sturdy, classically styled Salcombe Launch 16, an example of which, Miss Mouse, owned by watchkeeper Geoff Howell, was being snugly stored in one of the new boat sheds recently erected around the barn area and enlarging the premises to an impressive and extensive yard, well screened from the village by trees. Small boats are stored on racks, there was a Falmouth Bass boat, a unique double ended beach boat and a gigantic 8 1/2 metre rib among the many craft in varied states of fitting out. Several names make familiar entry in Prawle Point logbooks.

Around 80 boats per year, mainly with bilge or drop keel, are hauled out for maintenance or storage although fin keeled craft may be accepted for restoration, for instance the 32ft. Polish Folkboat, Madcap now gracing the workshop with her elegant lines.

Thanks are due to Garry and Tamsin for their time and kindness in making this article possible.

Jenny Brown



NATIONAL COASTWATCH INSTITUTION

Prawle Point

No: 35

'eyes along the coast'

Spring 2010

Coastwatch Visitor Centre Receives Lottery Funding

Visitors to the National Coastwatch (NCI) Station at Prawle Point will be able to learn about the outstanding natural, cultural and historical heritage of the beautiful South Devon coastline thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The award of £16,600 will allow the existing visitor centre to be completely refurbished with professionally designed displays, an observation window and radar and weather monitoring equipment.

A large number of local organisations have agreed to assist by providing ideas and material for the displays to help raise awareness of the heritage of the area and the need to conserve it. They include the National Trust, Devon Wildlife Trust, Devon Birdwatchers, South Devon AONB, Brixham Seawatch, Salcombe Lifeboat, Start Point Lighthouse, SW Maritime Archaeological Group, SW Coast Path Association, Slapton Ley Field Studies Centre, and Salcombe Maritime Museum. In addition, a number of local schools have expressed support for the project and are proposing to take part in a programme of educational visits and guided walks. Chivelstone Parish Council is also backing the scheme.

Commenting on the award, Prawle Point Station Manager, Roger Barrett, said: 'We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has enabled this work to take place. Although the safety of coast users is our top priority, we are always keen to welcome visitors to show them what we do and provide them with information about this magnificent section of coast. The re-vamped centre is sure to be a very popular attraction and a great learning resource for schools and youth groups'



A view of the Visitor Centre showing seaward elevation where a large viewing window will be installed.

The NCI Station at Prawle Point occupies a dramatic cliff top location on Devon's southernmost point. Built around 150 years ago as a Coastguard Signal Station, the Lookout is now manned 365 days a year by volunteer watchkeepers who look out for the safety of people at sea and along the coast. The Visitor Centre, adjacent to the Lookout, is a popular attraction for coastal walkers but is currently in a poor state of repair. With the aid of the generous HLF grant, the NCI will create a first class information centre for visitors and a valuable learning resource for schools and youth groups.

Through the new observation window to be inserted on the seaward side of the building, visitors will be able to view shipping and wildlife using a telescope to be provided by the Friends of Prawle Point. A radar monitor will also be installed to provide information on passing ships and a weather station will display current weather data.



Interior in need of refurbishment.

HLF's Head of Region for the South West, Nerys Watts, said: 'We are particularly pleased to be able to support this project at Prawle Point which focuses so closely on the rich natural and maritime heritage that the South West region has in such abundance. The newly refurbished visitor centre will provide local people and visitors alike with a wonderful opportunity to understand the environment of this spectacular coastline and to ensure that it can be conserved for future generations to enjoy.'

Roger Barrett

SOME COMMON SAYINGS OF A NAUTICAL ORIGIN

By and large	by, being the term for sailing into the wind and large, meaning a cross or more favourable wind.
Chock a block	when two blocks of a tackle come together allowing no further movement
By the board	over the ship's side as in de-masting - abandoned
Have someone over a barrel	Anyone rescued from drowning would be laid over a barrel to drain the lungs so would thus be in a helpless state
Son of a gun	originates as a boy born at sea, since wives and passengers were given quarters between cannons on the gun deck
3 sheets to the wind	loose sheets, sails flapping, loss of control
Taken aback	sudden headwind reducing forward motion
Bitter end	part of cable remaining on deck, abaft the bitts, when anchor is fully paid out
Freeze the balls off a brass monkey	Cannon balls were stored on deck within a retaining brass frame called a monkey. An accumulation of ice could cause the top balls to lift free.

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, NCI Prawle Point, Kingsbridge, PO BOX 58 TQ7 2QZ
Station tel. no. 01548 511259 www.nci-prawlepoint.org Cheques to NCI Prawle Point

HISTORICAL NEIGHBOURS

From Prawle Point, to the west, two other lookout structures are visible. The first, above Rickham Sands, is the thatched, white circular building at Gara Rock. Coastguards, living in the row of cottages nearby, undoubtedly used it as their lookout post and later, as some locals recall, it served as a tiny, but unique, bar when the coastguard cottages subsequently became the Gara Rock Hotel, recently, sadly demolished.

The terraced lawns with outstanding views and castellated wall, no longer accommodates guests and walkers enjoying drinks and meals while a pianist played Scott Joplin and the smart waiters served in style and today, the charming lookout stands derelict with boarded window and wind-ravaged thatch.



Gara Rock lookout now in a sorry state.

Further away, at West Soar, stands the four-square Admiralty Signal Station, robustly built in stone with a pyramidal roof. Not unlike Prawle Point Coastwatch Station, it was manned seven days a week largely by retired folk interested in maritime affairs, although their purpose differed from ours. The tower was erected as a link in the coastal chain, begun in 1794, for the passing of messages to ship owners and Lloyds as vessels progressed up the English Channel to ports further east. Prawle Point was the next station visible eastwards, though the position of the flanking station westwards remains a mystery. Each vessel was assigned four letters and the corresponding flags were hoisted to convey her identity to other ships and to those watching from the shore.

In those days, a 50ft mast, erected on the roof apex and 30ft poles angled from each side of the eaves, all equipped with a series of halyards, would have been used for hoisting the flags, pennants and black balls signifying a variety of messages as well as the identity of the vessel in sight. Each station bore a number, so, just as Prawle Point is identified by its name banner, seafarers could be reassured, or possibly dismayed, by evidence of their location. Poor visibility, however, must have prevented many a communication.



Signal Station at West Soar showing evidence of a previous adjoining building and high window through which a telescope protruded.

A telescope protruded through the small window high up on the seaward wall and, in the stonework on the western wall can be discerned the shape of a small attached building, since demolished, which may have served as accommodation. The interconnecting doorway is now walled up as is the east window, but visitors can enter through a doorway on the north wall. However, as the upper floor no longer exists, it is not possible to gaze seawards and imagine the scenes of long ago.

Jenny Brown

Friends Of Prawle Point

The Friends of Prawle Point (FOPP) have raised a total of £19,610 for Prawle Point station since their inception in 1999.

They have recently donated £90 for the purchase of a polarising filter for one of the telescopes, this reduces glare and aids sightings during sunny weather.

The 'Instant Wit' evening held in Sherford village raised over £500.

The Christmas Party held in December for watchkeepers and their partners was well attended and much enjoyed.

The Station is grateful for all their commitment and valuable support.

Forthcoming event- June 19th. Antique 6 Jazz Band at Charleton Village Hall.

FINDING SANCTUARY

The UK Government is committed to establishing a nation wide network of Marine Protected Areas by 2012.

So far, in the south west, Lundy Island is the first designated Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), a type of Marine Protected Area. Prior to this designation, Lundy was already a no-take zone and this protection has shown some positive results in both regeneration of habitat and proliferation of species.

There are now just five months left for water users to come forward and share their information and observations about the areas of sea they use in the south-west, so that their interests can be taken into account in the planning of new Marine Conservation Zones in the south west.



Four projects have been set up around England to work with sea users to decide where these zones should be and what level of protection they should have. These projects are Finding Sanctuary in the south-west, Balanced Seas in the south-east, Net Gain for the North Sea and Irish Sea Conservation Zones for the Irish Sea. Together they form The Marine Conservation Zone project, which Defra,

Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee set up.

Finding Sanctuary is the first ever project that gives people a real opportunity to be involved in plans to protect the marine environment in the south-west- this is a once in a generation chance for interested parties to make their views known.

Central to the Finding Sanctuary project is a regional Steering Group incorporating a wide range of sea users that will make its recommendations for new MCZs in the south west to Government in June 2011. Local MCZ Groups will work alongside the Steering Group so that local information and views can also be considered.

While discussions with the fishing community are well advanced, Finding Sanctuary is still looking for input from a wide range of leisure sea users who could find their activities affected by the creation of new MCZs. Possible restrictions could include no anchoring areas, new speed limits or even no-take zones.

So far over 700 sea anglers, 300 divers and 80 sailing and yacht clubs have shared their views and data with the project, but there are many more sea users in the region who have yet to get in touch. Whether your interest is dolphin watching, sailing, kite-surfing or kayaking, we want to hear from you.

Any club, association or individual who wants to contribute information to the project can do so via www.mczmapping.org or by contacting their Liaison Officer to arrange an interview. The website www.finding-sanctuary.org also has a list of drop-in days for sea users in the south-west region.

Liaison Officers contact details:

Devon - Dave Murphy
Tel: 07814 781 174, email: david@finding-sanctuary.org
Boating/ Watersports - Beth Henshall
Tel: 0770 9495629, email: beth@finding-sanctuary.org

This article was written by Joana Smith, Communications Coordinator of Finding Sanctuary. It does not necessarily represent the views of National Coastwatch.

NCI PRAWLE POINT : INCIDENTS TO DATE

20.02.10 Not an incident in the usual sense but notably interesting. Plymouth Longroom Control (PLC) contacted watchkeepers at Prawle Point asking whether Merchant vessel Alexandra S was in sight from the Lookout as they had lost contact with her on radar and could not raise her on VHF. Her position was given as 5.5nm south east of Prawle Point. Watchkeepers reported her bearing, distance, course, speed and likely ETA in Plymouth and that she did not appear to be in difficulty. They then continued to monitor her course, speed and bearing visually and by AIS and were later thanked by Plymouth Longroom Control for rapidity and extent of information provided. VHF contact with Alexandra S was subsequently established to the satisfaction of PLC.

SOME NATIONAL STATISTICS COMPILED FROM ALL NCI STATIONS DURING 2009

VESSELS IDENTIFIED AND LOGGED	
Commercial and Military	180919
Pleasure	193416
Total	374335
HOURS ON WATCH 39 STATIONS	
TRAINED & TRAINEE WATCHKEEPERS	1652
Auxiliaries	144
Total	1796
INCIDENTS	
MCA	818
Police	68
Ambulance, wildlife and other	323
Total	1209
NCI INITIATED LIFEBOAT RESCUES	
All at no cost to the nation	49